DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

Monday August 10 2026 | thetimes.com | No 75107

£3.20 £2.35 to subscribers
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My Gladiators advice for rugby star **By Sharron Davies** Sport

Harry loves Bagpipes! Does he miss Balmoral? Times2

‘Increased risk of blackouts’ from plan to cut electricity bills

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Britain will be at increased risk of nationwide blackouts because of an electricity system rule change designed to save money and help hit the government’s green targets, according to leading power generators.

The National Energy System Operator (Neso) is preparing to operate the grid with reduced levels of “inertia”, which acts as a “natural shock absorber” to maintain stability in the event that a power plant fails.

The state-owned body, whose task is to keep the lights on, said the new lower minimum inertia threshold, which has been approved but not yet implemented, would save consumers £96 million a year. It said the rule change would also give it “the flexibility to run the system greener” and pave the way to hit the government’s 2030 clean power target.

However, some of Britain’s biggest electricity companies said the change would leave the country at greater risk of nationwide blackouts, like those that hit the Iberian peninsula last year, and a control room whistleblower described the policy as a “massive gamble” and “truly insane risk-taking”. Drax, the operator of Britain’s biggest power plant, warned that the change could “compromise safety and reliability” and the cost savings would be “immaterial compared to potential costs of system failure that may arise as a result of reduced resilience from the tighter proposed operational inertia limits”.

EDF, which operates Britain’s nuclear reactors, warned that the change “may impact system resilience”. It said: “Resilience is crucial to support the UK economy. Any wider system issue that leads to countrywide or regional blackouts will incur an economic loss far greater than any stated saving of lower minimum inertia levels.”

Inertia is a crucial marker of the

Continued on page 2

PM’s adviser ‘concerned’ over Labour wealth taxes

Economist unconvinced about taking No 10 role

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Andy Burnham is struggling to convince one of his closest allies to join his government because the adviser has concerns about potential wealth taxes and wants to continue to pursue his business interests.

The Times has been told that Lord O’Neill of Gatley, a former Goldman Sachs economist and Treasury minister, has been offered significant ministerial and advisory roles but has yet to reach an agreement with No 10.

He is said to be concerned about putting his business interests, which include a science and technology investment company along with extensive shareholdings in banks, venture capital companies and private equity ventures, into a blind trust.

A Whitehall source familiar with the talks said O’Neill also had concerns about policy disagreements over issues such as potential wealth taxes, which have been advocated by some of the prime minister’s other close allies.

He previously said he was “very opposed” to wealth taxes because they could be “easily gamed” and did not raise a significant amount of money.

Discussions about a role are under way but O’Neill has yet to be convinced. He is understood to have made clear during the talks that he would be prepared to resign if the government pursued policies that he disagreed with, such as a wealth tax.

Burnham has also yet to secure the appointment of Andy Haldane, a former chief economist at the Bank of England who was expected to join him in No 10. Haldane is understood to have been providing advice informally.

The two appointments were seen as a key part of attempting to reassure the markets before Burnham became prime minister.

John Healey, the chancellor, faces the prospect of having to raise taxes further in his first budget, on October 28, to fund additional defence spending and cost of living support.

He said economic stability was his “fundamental” priority and asked government departments to make cuts to help fund Burnham’s spending pledges. However, he told The Times last month that he could not rule out tax rises and was clear that he would stand by the fiscal rules, limiting his ability to increase borrowing.

He and Burnham committed themselves to Labour’s manifesto pledge not to increase VAT, national insurance or income tax. Burnham’s team has been considering plans to raise capital gains tax, which is paid on the profits from shares, investments and some types of property, to help fund public spending.

Burnham previously said that work was overtaxed while assets were undertaxed. The comments led to suggestions that he could increase capital gains tax, bringing it in line with income tax. But senior government figures warned him that any major changes to

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IOANNIS ALEXOPOULOS/LNP

Hold tight A baby was among migrants boarding a small boat off Ecault, northern France, yesterday Attitudes shift, page 2

Burnham cannot block release of PC’s killers

Steven Swinford, Ollie Cole

The prime minister has been told that it will be impossible to secure an exemption to prevent the early release of PC Andrew Harper’s killers.

Andy Burnham was exploring “every option” to block the release of Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers under plans to ease pressure on overcrowded jails.

However, The Times has been told that one potential solution — exempting the killers of emergency workers from early release — has been judged a “complete non-starter”. Officials have said such a policy would prompt a legal challenge that ministers would inevitably lose because there is no specific offence for manslaughter of an emergency worker. The only way to keep them in jail would be to block the early release of all inmates convicted of manslaughter, which numbers in the hundreds.

The government plans to release 5,000 criminals early over ten months from October. Burnham said last week that he had “pushed to the very limits of what is possible to do” by preventing 1,000 rapists and child sex groomers from being released early. Harper, 28, was killed in 2019 after responding to a quad bike theft in Berkshire and was dragged for more than a mile after his ankle became caught in a strap trailing the getaway car.

Stuart Blaik, the detective superintendent who led the Harper investigation, suggested that those considered more culpable during sentencing could be barred from release. However, officials said the approach would not work because judges did not always include a culpability rating in their sentences.

“It’s impossible,” a source said. “There is no way to make an exception for them without extending it to everyone convicted of manslaughter.”

Probation strike fears, page 6

Today's highlights

7am	**Chris McDonald**, business minister
7.25am	**Dr Clare Bannon**, chair of the BMA GPs committee for England
8.25am	**Richard Hammond**, the former Top Gear presenter, right, on the end of the convertible car
10.30am	The world affairs briefing with The Sunday Times's **Mark Urban**
1.20pm	**Graeme Downie**, Labour MP in favour of North Sea drilling

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TODAY'S EDITION

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Why this summer's drought could lead to food shortages

The UK typically produces about half of the food the country eats but this year's drought has led to shrivelling crops and farmers struggling to feed their animals. Is our changing climate jeopardising our food security?

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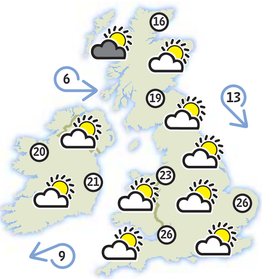
THE WEATHER



A dry and warm day for most with plenty of sunshine and one or two showers. **Full forecast, page 43**

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Published in print and all other derivative formats by Times Media Ltd, 1 London Bridge St, London, SE1 9GF; telephone 020 7782 5000.
Printed by Newsprinters Holdings Ltd, Great Cambridge Rd, Waltham Cross, EN8 8DY; Kitling Rd, Prescot, Merseyside, L34 9HN; and Byramsmuir Road, Holytown, Motherwell, ML1 1NP.
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Britons' attitudes to migrants have hardened in past decade

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

A decade of small boats crossing the Channel has fundamentally changed Britain's attitudes towards immigration, research for The Times finds.

YouGov has returned to a large-scale survey it carried out in 2016 to see how the British public's views on European and wider migration have changed.

It found that the percentage of Britons who said that migration had been mostly bad for the UK has increased to 43 per cent, up from 33 per cent in 2016. Just one in five voters thought migration has been "mostly good" for the country.

The rise in concern about immigration has been particularly marked for those who voted to remain in the European Union in 2016. Among this group the number who said migration had been bad for the country has risen from 12 to 22 per cent.

The polling also asked voters which countries they would support migrants to come from.

More than a fifth of voters said the UK should take no migrants from Nigeria and a quarter would have a complete ban on Pakistani nationals settling in the UK. But a similar number (24 per cent) would stop migration from Israel, while 34 per cent would stop migration from Russia, highlighting the impact of foreign conflicts on British domestic opinion. Russia was not bottom of the table in 2016 but it has experienced a 13 percentage point growth in the number of Britons wanting fewer or no migrants from the country in the past ten years.

Likewise, there has been an 8 percentage point increase in the number wanting to see fewer or no migrants from Israel, from 39 per cent in 2016 to 47 per cent now. Green party voters were the least likely to say they wanted less migration to the UK , but when it came to Israel they were almost as hardline as Reform voters.

When asked what factors were the most important when considering whether an economic migrant should come into the UK, the top category was to ensure they did not have a criminal record.

The next was whether they had skills in an area where the UK had a shortage and their level of English (86 per cent said it was important).

The least important factor was their religion, which was cited by just 34 per cent, while 60 per cent said their existing wealth should be a factor.

However, 67 per cent of Reform voters thought a migrant's religion was important, compared with only 12 per cent of Green voters.

Matthew Smith, the head of data journalism at YouGov, said the company had been interested in seeing how attitudes had shifted over the course of a decade.

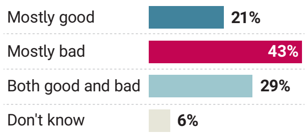
"We found a ten-point increase in the number saying it has been mostly bad (to 43 per cent) and a nine-point reduction in the number deeming it 'both good and bad' (to 29 per cent), meaning the negative view of immigration has supplanted the balanced view as the most commonly held among the wider public," Smith said.

"Both leavers and remainers had a similarly-sized increase in the number saying immigration has been mostly bad for the country.

"That said, not all the changes have been anti-immigration. There has been a stark drop in the number of Britons wanting to see fewer Poles coming to the UK than in 2016, from 42 per cent to 26 per cent."

Less than welcome

Do you think the level of immigration over the past ten years has been good or bad for Britain?



2,053 adults polled between June 8-9 2026. Source: YouGov

Netanyahu rejects Trump plan to rehabilitate Gaza

Gabrielle Weiniger

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, has formally rejected a 15-point plan for the Gaza Strip put forward by President Trump's Board of Peace.

The document was supposed to lay out the second phase of a ceasefire deal last October that ended two years of war between Israel and Hamas. Under the plan, Hamas would disarm and Israel would withdraw from the territory. However, it was not clear which would come first.

"Israel rejects the 15-point Gaza document proposed by the Board of Peace," Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting yesterday. "The IDF [Israel Defence Forces] will not carry out any withdrawal until Hamas is disarmed."

Trump previously said that Israel was "very happy" with the "historic" deal, brokered by the organisation he set up last year with the help of his son-in-law Jared Kushner and Sir Tony Blair, the former prime minister. Trump is the board's chairman for life and executive members include the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, and the special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, as well as Blair.

Netanyahu said Israel was in discussions with the US and knew "how to stand our ground" on the issue, even against "our closest allies". Since the announcement of the Board of Peace deal last week, Israel has increased its strikes on Gaza. At least 1,214 Palestinians have died in strikes since October, according to the local health ministry linked to Hamas. Hamas has called for an end to attacks before it turns over its heavy weaponry.

Israel considers the group's disarmament essential to prevent any repeat of the attacks on October 7, 2023.

Israel's army radio reported yesterday that Netanyahu — who is running for re-election this year — and his defence minister, Israel Katz, had quietly approved the development and reconstruction of a part of Gaza in east Rafah, inside Israel's control. Netanyahu's office said the report "distorted the facts".

The Board of Peace plan aims to create a Palestinian state, but Netanyahu said yesterday that "as long as I am prime minister, a Palestinian state will not be established".

Reform would deport foreign prisoners

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Nigel Farage has pledged to send all foreign criminals in British prisons to their country of origin or a third country such as El Salvador or Kosovo to serve their sentences.

Reform UK said this would free up 10,000 prison places. If it were not satisfied that people would be "securely incarcerated in their country of origin" a Reform government would rent places at jails in countries such as El Salvador, which has a hardline prison system.

The plans are likely to face obstacles, not least securing the agreement of other countries to accept offenders.

Zia Yusuf, home affairs spokesman, said: "Reform will bring justice back to Britain, ensuring those who commit serious crimes ... serve their full sentences."

Reform said it would also abolish early release for serious crimes, reinstate short sentences and push back parole reviews. It has pledged to build 12,000 "Nightingale" prison places.

HMP Chequers, letters, page 20

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

System rule change a 'gamble'

electricity grid's stability, and Neso says it is "incredibly important to the stable operation of the electricity system".

Neso, which has yet to confirm the timescale for the change, insisted there would be "no tangible increase" in risk because it could use rapid-response batteries to respond to supply shocks.

Ofgem, the energy regulator, approved the change in May despite the industry concerns, which were raised in a consultation last year.

Neso has to keep supply and demand in balance at all times, maintaining the system at a safe frequency. If there is a sudden imbalance in supply and demand, such as a power station failure, plants can trip and blackouts are risked.

EDF said reducing inertia now would be "premature" and new nuclear projects such as those it was building would "play a vital role in future" in providing system stability, including inertia.

Neso is under scrutiny over a prolonged drop in electricity generation on June 23, when internal reports showed that "system security was compromised". Whistleblowers claimed the country came close to blackouts.

Neso said: "The secure operation of Great Britain's electricity system is Neso's highest priority. The analysis shows these proposals will maintain system security while delivering significant savings for consumers."

Ofgem said: "We approved Neso's revised plan only after considering stakeholder concerns, further evidence and independent technical advice, and with safeguards in place. This is not a blanket approval to operate at lower inertia."

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said: "We are very confident in our security of supply arrangements, and that Neso have the tools they need to manage the system."

Burnham has brought pragmatism to net zero plans, leading article, page 21

Underground lair that fired up Jam

Paul Weller wrote his 1980 pop classic in a coal cellar close to the elites it railed against, **Peter Allen** writes

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Some of the Jam's biggest hits were written by Paul Weller, bottom right, from a tiny coal store in the heart of London

Written on a freezing cold night in a tiny, dank coal store beneath a Georgian terrace in central London, *Going Underground* would go on to become one of the most beloved and lauded protest songs ever written.

Delivered with their trademark melodic fury, the Jam's 1980 classic, penned by a 21-year-old Paul Weller freshly lubricated from a night in the pub, is a sharp rebuke of Margaret Thatcher's first year as prime minister.

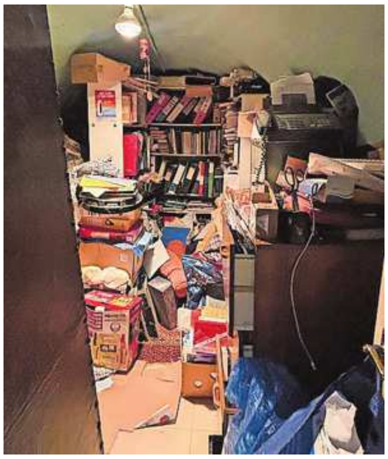
The song went straight to No 1 in the UK charts in March of that year, as Weller continued to produce other classics in the same cellar, from *A Town Called Malice* to *That's Entertainment*.

It can now be revealed that the coal vault where Weller wrote some of his best-known songs lay beneath a Georgian terrace in Denbigh Street, Pimlico — just a short walk from Westminster and Downing Street. Ministers and peers lived in grand, listed houses in the Pimlico of Weller's day, while Lady Diana Spencer — the future Princess of Wales — was a teenage assistant at the Young England Kindergarten across the road.

Weller, who was earning £100 a week at the time, was influenced less by Pimlico's grand terraces than by the crime-ridden housing estates of London's SW1 district. The Mod-revival artist's songs were filled with police sirens, terror on the London Underground, dead-end jobs and lives marked by frustration and despair.

Today, Weller's subterranean lair remains largely unchanged. There are still no windows and, as in 1979, a single lightbulb illuminates decades of clutter beneath the terrace above. In interviews over the years, he has referred to the bunker as "a tiny little recess-type thing", adding: "I'd sit there writing songs with my guitar."

The two-bedroom flat provided plenty of material for Weller's poetic lines. Discussing *That's Entertainment* — which refers to "a freezing cold flat with damp on the walls" — Weller told the BBC in 2012: "It was just everything that was around me, you know. My little flat in Pimlico did have damp on the walls and it was f***ing freezing."



At the time, Britain was plunged into recession with unemployment soaring. Having moved to London from Woking, the Surrey commuter town where he was born, Weller built his music around a bleak commentary on Britain's decline.

"You choose your leaders, and place your trust, as their lies wash you down and their promises rust," he sang in *Going Underground*. Pointing to Thatcher's reforms of the NHS, he continued: "You'll see kidney machines replaced by rockets and guns."

The song's official video shows photographs of postwar Tory leaders from Anthony Eden to Thatcher being swept away while — interestingly — excluding Winston Churchill, another former Pimlico resident.

Weller certainly captured the inequalities of the Thatcher years, focusing on youthful fury at all manifestations of the class system, including the public schools. Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, the former prime minister, has described the Jam's *The Eton Rifles* — an attack on Cameron's alma mater — as one of his favourite songs. That's despite the references to violent toffs who are more interested in rugby and artillery guns than the state of the nation.

Despite the gloom, Weller also expressed a rugged individualism that would have impressed Thatcher, starting *Going Underground* with the words: "Some people might say my life is in a rut; I'm quite happy with what I got."

Fiona, who has owned the flat for the past 25 years and asked to be referred to by her first name only, said: "It's a delightful place to live. The recess is small, but a very peaceful place to work. I suspect the main attraction for a musician was that it was entirely insulated, so he wouldn't annoy the neighbours."

Thomas Cubitt, the master builder who developed Pimlico from 1825 onwards, created hundreds of similar brick barrel cellars, accessed through street-level coal holes. The main fuel of Britain's Industrial Revolution became obsolete in London in 1956, when the Clean Air Act banned the coal burning that had helped cause the Great Smog of 1952. This left the cellars largely neglected until imaginative conversions later brought them back into use.

Other musical addresses nearby include the site of Vanilla Studios, where The Clash wrote some of their finest work, including their landmark album *London Calling* in 1979. The area's musical connections predate rock and punk by centuries: in 1764, an eight-year-old Mozart composed his first symphony in E-flat major in Ebury Street.

Weller was always quick to move on: he broke up the Jam before turning 25, parting company with the bassist Bruce Foxton, his school friend, and the drummer Rick Buckler, before finding further success with the Style Council and then as a solo artist.

He has long since abandoned Pimlico as a home, but returned for a private visit in 2018 when he was seen posing for a photograph above his old coal bin.

A long-term Denbigh Street resident who remembered Weller "looking like a very young lad" when he lived in the basement, said: "People are always nostalgic about places that helped with their success, and Paul clearly isn't any different — Pimlico helped make him, and his brilliant music."

Best songs can emerge from curious places, leading article, page 21

Banksy artworks cost public £150k for clean-up and security

Charlotte Reck

Three artworks by Banksy, the street artist and political activist, have cost the taxpayer almost £150,000 in cleaning and security since appearing in London, with the figure set to rise.

The highest expenditure relates to a mural painted on the Royal Courts of Justice last September, where removal efforts and security have run up a bill of more than £85,000, the BBC said.

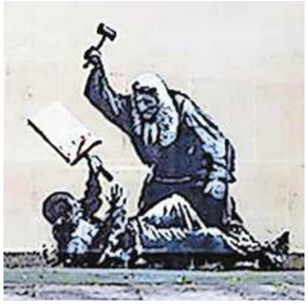
Stencilled on to the grade II listed building's exterior in Carey Street in Westminster, the mural depicts a judge in a traditional court gown and wig hitting an unarmed protester with a gavel.

The piece, with splatters of blood red across the protester's placard, was interpreted as a comment on the government's legal crackdown on the protest group Palestine Action under the Terrorism Act 2000.

The Ministry of Justice told the BBC in response to a freedom of information request that it had spent £50,000 attempting to strip paint from the wall and a further £35,300 on security costs.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service said: "The Royal Courts of Justice is a listed building and HMCTS are obliged to maintain its original character."

Debate has long surrounded the anonymous artist's work. While some esteem Banksy's creative output as valuable public art accessible to everyone, others regard it as nothing more than vandalism.



A Banksy at the Royal Courts of Justice cost the taxpayer £85,000

"It's outrageous that tens of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money — maybe more — will have to be spent cleaning up after Banksy, who seems to believe he has a right to deface public buildings with impunity," Nick Timothy, the shadow justice secretary, said. "Banksy's vandalism should be stopped and he should foot the bill."

But Estelle Lovatt, an art critic, said: "Some people visit Buckingham Palace and others visit Banksy's art. His work brings people together in a way that politics can divide us. He makes art accessible because there's no gallery fee."

Attempts to remove the mural failed and contractors have since been using laser technology. However, if Westminster city council is displeased with the result, another cleaning method will be employed. As a final option, the compromised stonework may be replaced.

Another Banksy resulted in almost £60,000 in costs for Westminster city council. The statue of a man clutching a flag obscuring his vision appeared in Waterloo Place in April. The costs were attributed by the council to safety barriers, administration and security.

In August 2024, Banksy painted piranhas on a City of London police sentry box installed in the 1990s as a security measure against the IRA. The box was removed, costing £2,200.

BENSCAPMEDIA

Spit and polish Steven D Murray prepares his 1953 Rolls-Royce for Motors by the Moat at Leeds Castle, Kent, at the weekend. The event also featured stunt displays

Debt collectors paid millions to chase graduates living abroad

Aaliyah Ahmed

Debt collection agencies are being paid millions of pounds to chase graduates who fail to repay their student loans, analysis by The Times has found.

The Student Loans Company (SLC) spent almost £1.8 million on external debt agencies in the first six months of the year — nearly double the amount spent during the same period last year.

The SLC, an arm's-length government body, said it had increased efforts to recover debts from graduates flouting their repayment duties, many of whom were living abroad.

Last week The Times reported that one in five student loans were now being given to non-British citizens, which risked costing the taxpayer thousands of pounds in unpaid debts. Research shows foreign students are about 25 per cent less likely to repay loans than their British counterparts.

In the past year foreign students received about £4 billion in tuition fees and maintenance loans, about 20 per cent of the total lending under the scheme. The vast majority went to EU citizens — one in 20 of all first-time student loans went to Romanians alone — and there are concerns within the government that the scheme is open to fraud.

Critics have warned the increase will fuel unpaid student loan debt. Figures suggest that UK taxpayers face losing between £1.2 billion and £2.2 billion each year.

Analysis of the SLC's spending data showed that it spent £1.77 million on companies categorised as "debt collectors" between January and June this year. This is compared to £948,074 during the first six months of 2025.

Between 2021 and June this year the SLC spent £11.3 million on external debt collection agencies such as TDX Group and Experian.

Most graduates who remain in the UK repay their student loans automatically through the pay-as-you-earn scheme. But graduates who move overseas are responsible for informing the SLC of their move and income details. They are then responsible for making their repayments directly. These borrowers may be British-born graduates who move abroad or foreign students who went to British universities.

Where borrowers fail to inform SLC of a move abroad or fall behind on repayments, it can use external debt collection agencies to pursue the debt.

In the 2024-25 financial year, the SLC recovered £7.7 million from non-compliant overseas borrowers, according to government figures published via a parliamentary question answered by the Department for Education minister Josh MacAlister this year. He added that, on average, debt collection agencies delivered a return of investment of £5 for every £1 spent.

William Yarwood, the campaigns director of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "Taxpayers are paying twice, first for defaulted loans, and now for record bills from private debt collectors. Outsourcing enforcement shouldn't be a blank cheque."

An SLC spokesperson said: "As part of SLC's three-year transformation programme, the government is investing in SLC's debt recovery capability. As part of this investment, the annual spending on debt collection agency activity has increased."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "The public rightly expect these debts to be paid and so do we. That's why we are investing in the Student Loans Company's ability to collect debt and working closely with them to go further on getting back what is owed. We are also cracking down on abuse of student finance at its source, closing loopholes in regulation and preventing misuse of the system."

First person

I open my student finance account and think it's probably not one of the worst: £50,674 outstanding since I graduated four years ago (Marieta Marinova, below, writes).

I borrowed £39,000 for an undergraduate and postgraduate degree and will probably never pay it back. About £40 vanishes from my pay cheque every month and I think what else I could have spent it on.

It doesn't bother me much — until I think of friends who, like me, came from Bulgaria to study at English universities but have moved back and are dodging repayments. From ignoring letters and calls to declaring lower incomes or enrolling in university to stay classified as non-earning students, they have found endless loopholes.

They are among 370,000 overseas graduates owing nearly £13 billion, whom the Student Loans Company (SLC) admitted losing track of this year.

When I go back the topic inevitably comes up. I see unopened SLC letters scattered around their places and anxiety on their faces when they look at them. Part of me judges them, but I understand why they do it. Overseas thresholds are calculated based on local price indexes, so the earning threshold for Bulgaria is far lower than the UK: £11,390, compared with £29,385.

One friend was paying £4 a month for her undergraduate loan, while mine used to be £1 (before my postgraduate loan kicked in), despite me earning much more. She got into a dispute with the SLC after it tried to recalculate her payments based on a payslip including a one-off bonus. Eventually she removed her debit card details from her account. It makes me angry and can test friendships. But it is not hard to see why so many stop paying.

Quintagram® No 2642

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Number of quarts in a gallon (4)

— — — —

2 Multiplied by (5)

— — — — —

3 Signal fire or light (6)

— — — — — —

4 Fire or police headquarters (7)

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5 Dictated the movements of (10)

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A	A	B	C	C	D	E	E
E	F	I	I	L	L	M	N
N	N	O	O	O	O	O	R
R	S	S	T	T	T	T	U

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

1994 murder appeal

Merseyside police are appealing for information about the 1994 murder of Julie Finley, 23, saying that people may not have come forward at the time out of loyalty or fear. Finley, from Liverpool, was strangled and her body was dumped in a field near St Helens. A witness reported seeing a man trying to force a woman matching her description into a white van.

Long driving test wait

Half of learner drivers in areas including Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and London are waiting more than four months to take their driving test, according to research by the RAC Foundation. It found that the longest wait was almost seven months at Forfar, in Angus. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's target is seven weeks.

Power to the house elf

Harry Potter fans successfully petitioned for a £430 million power link between the UK and Ireland to be diverted to avoid a memorial to Dobby the house elf. The 125-mile cable runs from Co Wexford to Freshwater West, Pembrokeshire, where Dobby's death was filmed. Simon Ludlam said his firm, Etchea Energy, got "hundreds of calls" from fans.

Wham! photos to go go

Gered Mankowitz, 80, whose photographs were used on album covers by Kate Bush, Oasis, The Rolling Stones, Wham!, Jimi Hendrix and Duran Duran, is selling pictures of stars and other rock memorabilia because he will not have room for them in his new house. The auctioneer Gardiner Houlgate expects they will fetch £50,000 next month.

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Extradited ‘cartel boss’ charged

John Mooney, Patrick O’Donoghue

Daniel Kinahan has been charged with directing the activities of an organised crime group at a special sitting of a non-jury court in Dublin after his extradition from the United Arab Emirates.

Kinahan, 49, entered the Special Criminal Court at 8.09pm yesterday flanked by three armed officers and stood in the dock for the short hearing.

He is accused of being one of the leaders of the Kinahan crime cartel, an Irish group allegedly operating a drugs and firearms trafficking network.

Kinahan looked tired, had stubble and clasped his hands together as he addressed the court. He wore dark glasses, a black hoodie and tracksuit bottoms. The charge was read to him and he was remanded in custody to Portlaoise prison.

He faces a single charge of directing a crime organisation between October 18, 2015 and April 6, 2017.

At the outset of the hearing, the court was told that Kinahan was not legally represented. When the presiding judge, Mr Justice McGrath, noted his lack of legal representation, Kinahan stood up in the dock and said: “Yes, that is correct your honour, I didn’t have time to arrange anything.”

Explaining his situation to the three judges, Kinahan stated that he had been isolated in Dubai since Friday and had hoped a family member would contact a legal representative on his behalf but that had not been done.

Informed by the bench that a bail application could only be made through the High Court, Kinahan responded: “I think we know I won’t be getting bail but thanks for that.”

The judge decided to proceed with the hearing after Kinahan stated that he would organise representation once he had time. When advised by the judge to contact his lawyers and arrange representation, Kinahan replied: “I understand everything, thank you, your honour.”

Kinahan is scheduled to appear before the court again on October 5. Informed that he could attend the hearing in person or via video link, Kinahan said he would make his decision at a later date.

Kinahan was extradited at the weekend from Dubai, where he has lived for the past decade. He left in the morning on an Irish government jet which landed at Baldonnel airbase on the outskirts of Dublin shortly after 6pm. Detective Sergeant Colin Davidson said he had arrested Kinahan at 6.49pm and explained an arrest warrant issued by the court in March. Davidson later charged Kinahan within the court precincts. The registrar then read the charge to Kinahan, who confirmed his name.

Preparations for his arrival at Baldonnel had been under way for most of last week. Military personnel set down metal barriers while a police helicopter flew overhead.

Armed soldiers were stationed at the main entrance while a number of police vehicles patrolled the area.

The extensive operation caused disruption in the surrounding area. Local drivers expressed concern that the security measures would prevent them returning home when several of the surrounding roads were later blocked off as part of the operation to transport Kinahan to the Special Criminal Court.

As the jet made its way to Dubai on Saturday, the podcaster James English released audio recordings of Kinahan discussing his imminent return to Ireland. “The security is going to be crazy. I am sitting here reflecting a little,” he said. “Then I’m thinking of what happened, how I got here, all the stuff that’s happened in my life, the whole lot, just reflecting. It’s bittersweet. It’s going to be nice to get back. I was always proud to be Irish.”

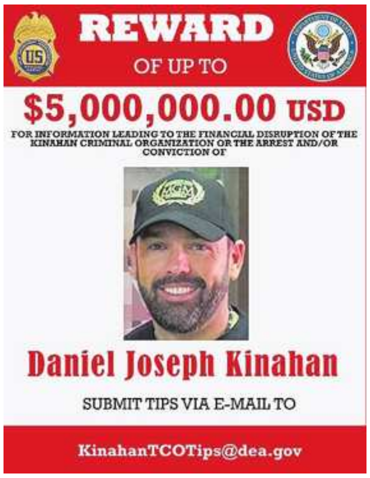
Kinahan’s appearance at the court follows a near decade-long investigation into his activities by the Irish authorities and their international counterparts.

For years, Kinahan lived a life of luxury in Dubai, using the UAE as a safe haven. However, the diplomatic landscape shifted when Ireland and the UAE negotiated an extradition treaty, in effect closing the net on the alleged cartel’s leadership. The pressure reached a tipping point in 2022 when the US government intervened, imposing severe financial sanctions on Kinahan, his father, Christy, and his brother, Christopher Jr, freezing their assets and locking them out of the global banking system. Simultaneously, the US Drug Enforcement Administration offered a $5 million (£3.7 million) reward for information about the three.

This intervention crippled the group’s alleged vast money-laundering operations and isolated its leaders from former associates.

Kinahan’s lawyer has previously stated that his client has no criminal record or convictions and that allegations he is a crime boss are false and have no evidential basis.

BRIAN LAWLESS/PA; BRYAN MEADE FOR THE TIMES



REWARD

OF UP TO

$5,000,000.00 USD

FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE FINANCIAL DISRUPTION OF THE KINAHAN CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION OR THE ARREST AND/OR CONVICTION OF

Daniel Joseph Kinahan

SUBMIT TIPS VIA E-MAIL TO

KinahanTCOTips@dea.gov

An Irish government aircraft carrying Daniel Kinahan landed at Baldonnel airbase, near Dublin, after he was extradited from Dubai. He was transported to court by car. A $5 million reward had been offered for information leading to his arrest

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Man ‘prepared to die’ after 14 years in custody over phone theft

Sian Bradley

Nearly 160 miles from home in Manchester, Clara White lay awake. She could not shake the sight of her brother, Thomas, crying during her visit to the psychiatric hospital in Northumberland where he is being held.

“I can see in the way he looks, the way he sits, that there’s absolutely nothing left in him to give,” she said. “He’s prepared to die in there.”

In 2012, Thomas White was arrested for stealing a mobile phone from two Christian missionaries while he was heavily intoxicated. He pleaded guilty and received an imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentence, a two-year tariff with no maximum term. He still has no release date. The 43-year-old was moved to hospital nine months ago after a political intervention. He had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, and an independent psychiatrist concluded the IPP term was the probable cause of his illness.

Andy Burnham has called for a review of IPP sentences as part of efforts to tackle the prison overcrowding crisis. Introduced in 2003 to protect the public from dangerous offenders whose crimes did not merit life sentences, IPPs were abolished in 2012, but not retrospectively. Lord Clarke of Nottingham, the former home secretary, told Times Radio that he “never imagined” that 14 years after abolishing IPPs, 2,329 people would remain “indefinitely detained”.

In 2016, White, held at HMP Norwich, was seen walking around the wing wrapped in a sheet, “presenting himself as Jesus Christ” and promising to heal people. After he was repeatedly sent to segregation while he was experiencing psychosis, “something died inside of him”, Clara White, a priest, said. “You’ve got to remember that he was a normal person. It’s the system that’s done this to him.” He was held at Strangeways until last year. Reports reached his family that he was jumping on safety netting, smashing his face against the floor and trying to set fire to himself. He was moved to a secure hospital but he faces being sent back to prison because staff say he is “not engaging” with therapy.

The Ministry of Justice said: “It is right that these sentences were abolished, and ... support has significantly improved for these offenders, with greater access to rehabilitation and mental health support. We are now looking at what more can be done.”

Thomas White with his mother, Margaret, and his sister, Clara

Probation strike threatens chaos for early release

Ollie Cole

Thousands of probation staff could strike in the coming months, potentially putting victim safety in doubt when the government's early release scheme comes into force.

Workers represented by the National Association of Probation Officers (Napo) are voting in an indicative ballot for industrial action on working hours. The result is due this afternoon and the union is expecting a "strong response" from members backing a move to a formal ballot on industrial action.

The Times understands that Napo would seek to take industrial action before the end of the year and about 8,000 members would be likely to walk out.

The early release scheme, which will be implemented from October, will pile pressure on the probation service, which is under extreme strain. Accommodation crises, repeated referrals, emergency planning and hours of hidden work are said to be pushing probation staff beyond safe limits, and the sector is "reliant on overtime".

Ian Lawrence, the Napo general secretary, said: "Without probation none of this [early release] can happen, so the service needs to be front and centre to this discussion."

The timeline for possible industrial action creates further uncertainty about the safety of Andy Burnham's revised early release scheme. The prisons watchdog told The Times that any industrial action would be "enormously disruptive" to ensuring the safe management of the scheme.

Martin Jones, His Majesty's chief inspector of probation, said: "I can certainly see that [industrial action] as something that's very high risk, even if there were simply to be any work to rule. One of the reasons why I suspect that some of the earlier schemes have found a way through is because people are working into the weekends and into the evenings. If people are saying they're just going to work nine to five, just going to do their actual work hours, that sort of thing is stuff that is certainly a risk."

PC Andrew Harper's widow, Lissie, is fighting the early release of his killers

The probation service employs about 21,000 full-time staff, but has a shortfall of about 1,500 full-time probation officers. The latest government data from December showed 5,437 full-time probation officers in post against a target level of 7,110.

"If this [early release] scheme works, the public and frankly the ministers owe the probation service a huge debt of gratitude," Jones added.

Napo's leadership has raised concern about cases falling through the cracks due to the extra workload the scheme is expected to generate.

Ben Cockburn, the union's national chair, said staffing levels were "incredibly dangerous" to the point of "overstretching and exhaustion."

"If you're in work and you experience that level of burnout and you're trying to cover an unmanageable workload, there is an ongoing fear that you are not going to do a particular task," he added.

"I think it's fair to say that, you know, we're putting ourselves at risk professionally trying to fill the gaps that the employer is allowed to develop."

Burnham faces a backlash for allowing two of the killers of PC Andrew Harper to be included in the early release scheme. Harper's widow, Lissie, 35, described it as a "secondary gut punch that is coming from the government".

Lord Clarke of Nottingham, the former Conservative justice secretary, told Times Radio yesterday that the prime minister would "discover that he is going to have to face up to some difficult decisions, that he will get strong criticism and when it's inevitable and has to be done, as in this case, it's no good just giving in every time that some particular case is thrown at him."

Burnham said he wanted to go further on the revised early release scheme, but that it had been "pushed to the very limits of what is possible to do".

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "Protecting the public is our top priority. The Sentencing Act is restoring order to a prison system left on the brink of collapse, while our record £700 million investment in probation and community punishment is ensuring staff have the resources, powers, and technology they need to manage offenders safely in the community.

"We have already exceeded our 2025-26 recruitment target, with 1,389 people starting as trainee probation officers last year against a target of 1,300."

Despite the investment cited by the department, Napo has warned it "cannot guarantee public protection". It says the potential release of thousands of perpetrators of domestic violence, who will be eligible for the scheme, means that "more people, largely women, are likely to be hurt or even killed".

Confidence in the justice system, letters, page 20

mirates
BETTER

Burnham struggles to recruit ally

Continued from page 1

capital gains tax rates could ultimately result in the Treasury losing money because people would delay selling assets to avoid paying it.

"I am very opposed to the general rule of wealth taxes," O'Neill told LBC shortly before Burnham became prime minister.

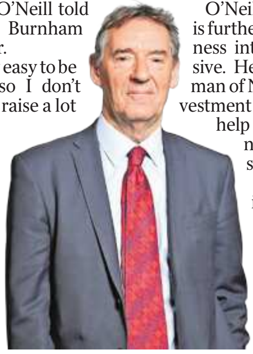
"I think they are very easy to be gamed and avoided, so I don't think they are likely to raise a lot of revenue."

He said any attempt to target financiers who made money by investing in British companies would affect growth.

"As someone who is heavily involved in venture capital, people have got to understand that this is hugely risky stuff," he said. "It is not like income from a job. Most venture investments go bust. You can lose all your money ... Genuine entrepreneurship and genuine risk-taking deserve to be taxed at a lower rate."

O'Neill's potential appointment is further complicated by his business interests, which are extensive. He is non-executive chairman of Northern Gritstone, an investment company established to help convert science and technology research at universities into businesses.

His register of interests in the House of Lords lists more than 70 shareholdings, including a significant number of venture capital investments. For O'Neill to serve in a government role, all his investments would need to be put into a blind trust, meaning he would have no say over how they were managed. O'Neill was commercial secretary to the Treasury a decade ago when David Cameron was prime minister.



Lord O'Neill of Gatley has extensive business interests

In his first week in power, Burnham announced giveaways that have yet to be fully funded. He revealed plans to cut VAT from consumer energy bills over the winter at a cost of £850 million, introduce a £2 cap on bus fares at a cost of £500 million and provide £100 million of help for pubs and live music venues.

Healey will have to find £4.7 billion to fund the defence investment plan on top of cuts to existing departmental budgets previously agreed by Sir Keir Starmer.

Backing wealth creation, letters, page 20
Levies on banks would hit growth, leading article, page 21

PM sets sights on 'rip-off' discounts and subscriptions

Steven Swinford

Andy Burnham has pledged to ban "rip-off" fake discounts ahead of beginning a national tour focused on the cost of living.

After his return from holiday, the prime minister intends to spend much of the rest of August travelling the country asking the public how the government can improve their lives.

Officials said he would be in "listening mode", and will focus on the cost of living and improving local high streets.

Burnham is expected to announce a series of "everyday fixes", promising to "pull every single lever we can to provide people with some room to breathe on the cost of living".

The government will launch a consultation on adding deceptive discount offers to the Competition and Markets Authority's list of banned practices.

This would make it easier for the watchdog to punish companies that engage in practices such as artificially inflating prices and then immediately offering a "discount" to make a product appear to be of better value than it is.

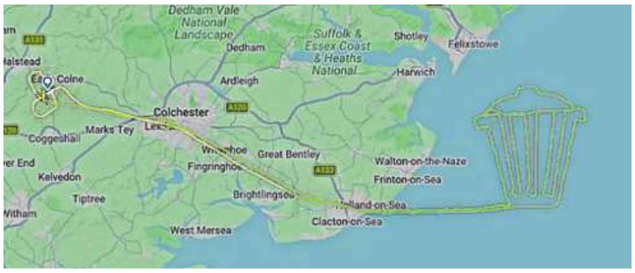
Last year research by Which?, the consumer magazine, looked at 175 Black Friday deals sold by eight retailers — Amazon, AO, Argos, Boots, Currys, John Lewis, Richer Sounds and Very. It found that 83 per cent of the products were cheaper or the same price at least once in the six months either side of the sale.

Burnham will also accelerate plans to tackle "subscription traps" by requiring companies to make it easier to cancel subscriptions as well as provide more

JEREMY SELWYN; JACQUELINE LAWRIE/LNP

macron
FOOTBALL SHIRTS

Sir Keir Starmer was seen having a kickabout with the actor Hugh Dennis in north London at the weekend, while Andy Burnham was shopping for retro football kits with Ellis Platten, a YouTuber. Nigel Farage was out canvassing in Clacton, Essex, before a by-election this Thursday. His big rival in the race, Count Binface, appeared to get an endorsement from a pilot, who spent an hour zigzagging the coast to mark out the shape of a bin, according to Flightradar24



Unions set to gain from new rules on £90bn state deals

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Labour will prioritise companies for government contracts if they give trade unions access to their employees, offer higher pay than the minimum wage and provide flexible working.

Andy Burnham has announced that the government will double the credit given to companies bidding for central government contracts that provide "social value" for local communities.

They will be required to show how they are supporting people into work and addressing local skills shortages as part of the prime minister's pledge to deliver "growth in every postcode". It represents a new focus on creating jobs rather than meeting green targets. Previously social value was measured partly by meeting environmental goals.

Details of the plans, which have been published by the Cabinet Office, show that employers will be rewarded for "fair working conditions" and "fair pay".

Under the changes, the weighting for the "social value" that companies deliver will be doubled from 10 per cent to 20 per cent for contracts worth more than £5 million. It represents a significant overhaul of the £90 billion public procurement system.

The Cabinet Office has proposed companies that demonstrate "fair working conditions" and offer staff "more than the statutory minimum" should be awarded more points. It said this could include "access to trade union representation" and "flexible working arrangements", along with promoting "a positive workplace culture".

It also said that employers should offer "fair pay", with more points awarded for companies that "go further" than the minimum wage of £12.71 an hour, offer "progressive" pay policies and "reward and retain staff".

Companies will also be required to demonstrate that they are creating and retaining high quality jobs, and providing training opportunities in areas where there are skills shortages.

There is a focus in poorer areas, with companies asked to address "barriers to entry" for young people by providing placements and apprenticeships. Burnham has said he wants companies to offer 45 days of work experience.

The approach has been criticised by the Conservatives. Alex Burghart MP, the shadow chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said: "Labour are rolling out a trade union checklist of anti-growth policies that will burden businesses with even more costs and red tape.

"Having already been hammered by Labour's national insurance hike, business rates raid and disastrous Employment Rights Act, any business seeking to take on a government contract will now have to dance to the union barons' tune. The prime minister may have changed, but it's the same old Labour Party in power, doing the bidding of their union paymasters.

"It's little wonder that growth is so sluggish and unemployment is so high. Only the Conservatives will give businesses the environment to grow, including by ditching the job-destroying Employment Rights Act and scrapping business rates for thousands of firms to get Britain working again."

Burnham said last week: "We're changing the rules. When applying for a contract from the government there will now be one simple test: are you creating British jobs? And are you giving young people the skills they need for their future? These new rules will ensure the £90 billion that is spent each year through government contracts supports British jobs, skills and people in every postcode."

A government spokesperson said: "This government is committed to making sure every pound of taxpayer money is delivering real benefits for communities, developing skills and creating new jobs in every part of the country.

"These changes will cut red tape and ensure that every business is focused on delivering British jobs. Our priority is good growth in every postcode and we're using £90 billion of public contracts to make sure it happens."

A government source added: "The Tories are attacking a framework they created. It was their leader who passed the legislation [on social weighting] when she was business secretary.

"This government is clear about its priority: cutting red tape and getting on with the job of creating more jobs in every postcode."

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information about up-front costs, rather than quietly auto-renewing them at a higher price.

The changes, announced in April, had been expected to come into force next spring, but Burnham will bring their introduction forward to January.

He said: "I know people are sick and tired of rip-off discounts and subscription traps. Westminster has got used to telling people that everyday hassles like this are just part of life.

"I don't think that's right, especially when the cost of living continues to weigh heavily on so many lives."

Dame Clare Moriarty, the chief executive of Citizens Advice, welcomed the proposals, saying subscription traps and deceptive discounts were "a widespread problem".

Citizens Advice found previously that 26 per cent of UK adults had accidentally taken out a subscription in a year. The government said its action could save households £14 a month.

More announcements are expected over the summer and the prime minister described the proposals to be announced on Monday as "just the start".

Opposition figures criticised his summer plans as a "vanity tour" offering only "tinkering" and urged him to implement broader tax cuts.

Burnham's tour follows his pledge on his first day in office to give the public "breathing space" on bills.

In his first week in Downing Street, he announced cuts to VAT on household energy bills and a £2 cap on bus fares to tackle the cost of living. However, rising prices remain a significant issue for the public due to the fallout from the Iran war, which is keeping inflation higher than expected.

Sir Mel Stride, the shadow chancellor, said: "Andy Burnham has already run out of ideas. The cost of living didn't become a problem last week, so you have to ask why it has taken Labour so long to enact legislation passed by the previous government.

"Labour's tax hikes have sent costs soaring for hardworking families and destroyed jobs. Consultations and reheated measures won't make up for that."

Royal Navy drones sent data to China

Lara Bowman

The Ministry of Defence was forced to remove all internet connectivity from cameras fitted to Royal Navy drone boats after discovering that data was being secretly sent back to China.

The cameras were installed on K3 Scouts, unmanned high-speed boats that can be controlled remotely. Britain bought 20 under Project Beehive, a £12.3 million programme intended to extend the use of drones alongside conventional warships. They are intended for surveillance, training and operations by the Coastal Forces Squadron and 47 Commando Royal Marines.

The MoD strongly denied that any sensitive or operational information was sent abroad, saying that an investigation found "no evidence of MoD data or systems being accessed, compromised or transmitted externally". A security assessment found that the cameras were sending "heartbeat communications" to an internet address in China, The Daily Telegraph reported. These are automatic messages sent by a connected device to confirm that it is online and working normally.

A defence source alleged that preparations for possible British operations in the Gulf had been recorded on the devices, the newspaper reported.

The source said: "This is major failure to check origins of components and we have lost confidence in the platform."

However, there was no evidence that the transmissions contained pictures, sound, location information or military plans, the MoD said.

The K3 Scout can travel at more than 60mph, remain at sea for up to 30 days and carry 600kg of cameras, sensors or weapons. An MoD spokesman said: "The first duty of government is national security, and we take the security of our equipment, networks and data extremely seriously. A routine cybervulnerability assessment identified an issue affecting a Kraken unmanned surface vessel sub-system used by the Royal Navy. A thorough investigation found no evidence of MoD data or systems being accessed, compromised or transmitted externally."

They added that a third-party supplier responsible for the camera component had previously given assurances about its security.

A spokesman for Kraken, the British company that supplied the boats, told The Telegraph: "We are aware that some third-party, NDAA-compliant cameras had a small number of components originating from outside the UK.

"After a full audit by both Kraken and the Royal Navy we are confident no sensitive information has ever been shared outside of intended channels and any potential vulnerabilities have been identified and closed."

MARK NAFTALIN FOR THE TIMES

Floor show The Victorian tiles at St George's Hall in Liverpool are usually protected by wooden flooring but will be uncovered until September 2. Gabriella Hernandez, an art teacher, was an early visitor

Cutting exercise by minutes 'drives up the risk of cancer'

Shayma Bakht

Reducing exercise by even a few minutes a day can push up the risk of cancer, research suggests.

Experts found that swapping vigorous movement for more sedentary behaviour — such as watching television or sitting at a desk — increased the incidence of cancer.

Research, published in the BMC Medicine journal, found that people who had been active throughout their lives should do all they could to maintain exercise, as even minor drops in activity could affect health. Previous studies also found strong evidence that higher levels of activity were linked to a lower risk of several cancers including types relating to the bladder, breast, bowel, kidney and stomach.

Analysis of 59,218 people from the UK Biobank, a database of half a million volunteers who take part in medical research, used modelling to see how exercise was linked to cancer risk. The analysis was based on a group that was 55 per cent female with an average age of 61.7. In an eight-year follow-up, there were 2,385 cancers in the group.

Researchers looked at areas such as how long people spent sleeping, sedentary behaviour such as watching TV, standing and then any movement and the level of intensity.

They found that the more people moved, the lower their risk of cancer.

Case studies that replaced 15 minutes of sleep or sedentary behaviour with 15 minutes of movement were each linked to a 2 per cent reduced risk of cancer.

Swapping 30 minutes of movement for 30 minutes of sedentary behaviour increased the risk by 8 per cent, while swapping it for sleep increased the risk by 7 per cent.

Dr John Mitchell, lead author from University College London, said: "Our study showed that there's an increased risk of cancer for those who spend a lot of time sitting down.

"We also explored what might happen if people leading active lives reduced their levels of physical activity and found that they also face a higher cancer risk.

"Based on theoretical modelling, our study showed even losing two to three minutes per day of vigorous activity, such as running for a bus, and replacing it with sitting down, sleep or light activity increased their cancer risk."

NHS guidelines say adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity a week. They should also do strength activities that work all the major muscle groups at least two days per week.

"Other examples of vigorous activity — that is, anything which elevates your heart rate and makes you sweat — include sport, rushing up the stairs and carrying home heavy grocery bags," added Mitchell. "The take-home message is that for people already leading physically active lives, it's really important to maintain that level of activity as you get older."

Examples of moderate activity include very brisk walking at 4mph or faster, cycling at 10mph to 12mph, or badminton. Vigorous activity also includes hiking, jogging at 6mph or faster, fast cycling, basketball or tennis.

I was blasé after finding a breast lump, says MP

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

A minister has revealed that she ignored a breast lump for two months because she assumed she was too young and healthy to have cancer.

Claire Hughes, 47, said she had been "blasé" after discovering a lump by chance, convincing herself that it was probably a harmless cyst.

The Labour MP for Bangor Aberconwy, who was diagnosed with aggressive grade 3 triple-negative breast cancer just weeks after becoming a government whip and a minister in the Wales Office, said she hoped that sharing her experience would persuade other women to check themselves regularly and seek medical advice quickly.

"I just thought, I'm young, it wouldn't happen to me," Hughes told The Times.

The MP, who has released an eight-minute documentary about her treatment, found the lump last year while she walked through the Palace of Westminster. "I was moving my arm around and I was like, under my arm feels a bit sore, you know, like when you've got a swollen gland," she said. "So I just started prodding ... and then I was like, 'oh, there's a little lump further down'."

Hughes decided to wait until parliamentary recess to see her GP. "I probably waited like two months, which is stupid — really stupid looking back."

After being referred to a rapid assessment clinic, she had a mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy in a day. Although doctors did not confirm the diagnosis immediately, she said she knew from their expressions what was coming. "I knew in my heart of hearts straight away, 'oh shit, I've got cancer'," she said.

Claire Hughes was treated for cancer after she delayed seeing her GP about a lump

Surgeons attempted a lumpectomy but later recommended a mastectomy — a decision she is grateful for as a second tumour was found after surgery. She then underwent chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Hughes, who has two teenage children, remained a minister and worked remotely during her treatment. She said she was considering having her remaining breast removed because she had found a second, harmless, lump in it. "For my peace of mind, I would rather not have it," she said.

Not enough women take folic acid

Concerns have been raised that a large number of women are not taking a pre-pregnancy vitamin that helps prevent health problems in babies.

A report suggests there has been a "worrying" fall in women taking folic acid before they get pregnant in all regions of England apart from London.

Overall, fewer than one in five (19.8 per cent) women in England took folic acid before becoming pregnant in 2024/25. The figure steadily declined from 2021/22 when 26.2 per cent took the supplement before pregnancy, a commentary published in the journal BJOG: An International Journal Of Obstetrics And Gynaecology shows.

Women who are trying to get pregnant are advised by the NHS to take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.

Folic acid helps a baby's brain, skull and spinal cord develop and taking it cuts the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida, as well as other conditions. Researchers from the University of Southampton warned that the decline is undermining progress in preventing serious birth defects.

By the end of 2026, millers and flour producers will be required by law to fortify non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid. While the move has been welcomed, experts have said that fortification alone will not be enough and should not replace supplements for women who are planning a pregnancy.

"Taking folic acid before pregnancy is one of the simplest and most effective steps women can take to support a healthy start for their baby," said the lead author of the paper, Dr Danielle Schoenaker, NIHR advanced fellow at the university and NIHR Biomedical Research Centre: Southampton.

Garden centres switch to drought-resistant plants

Guy Taylor Retail Correspondent

Britain's biggest garden centre group is turning to plants native to Australia, Africa and the Mediterranean in response to this summer's record-breaking heatwave.

From the sky-blue agapanthus 'African lily' to southern Europe's santolina 'cotton lavender', these plants offer drought-resistant qualities that have enabled garden centres to weather a uniquely challenging summer trading season, according to Blue Diamond, which has been developing a "thrive, not survive" range to cope with rising temperatures.

Others include the callistemon 'bottlebrush', a variety from Australia, and the Lagerstroemia 'crepe myrtle', a deciduous shrub or small tree with white, pink or purple flowers.

Alan Roper, the managing director of Blue Diamond, which employs about 4,700 staff across more than 50 garden centres in the UK and Channel Islands, said: "I've never seen heat have such a profound effect on a season in my 36 years of garden centre retailing."

Large parts of England are in drought, alongside the entirety of Wales, compounding the pressure on local garden centres after a challenging few years characterised by mounting cost pressures and flatlining sales.

Hot weather has shortened the shelf life of plants and led to a sharp decline in footfall on certain days. Profitability has been impacted by increased wastage and discounting on heat-exhausted varieties.

Last month the Horticultural Trades Association, which represents growers, garden retailers and manufacturers, warned of "increasingly unpredictable weather patterns" and criticised public messaging surrounding hosepipe bans.

The blue agapanthus, known as the African lily, can survive dry conditions

Gardening sales in June, the most up-to-date figures for the sector, showed a 5 per cent decline year on year and a 13 per cent drop when compared with 2024.

"Gardening seasons disrupted by extreme heat used to come around perhaps once a decade. Today they're becoming far more frequent and intense," Roper told The Times. "Five of the last six summers had above-average temperatures and the last two broke heat records."

He described it as a "new normal" that could no longer "be ignored".

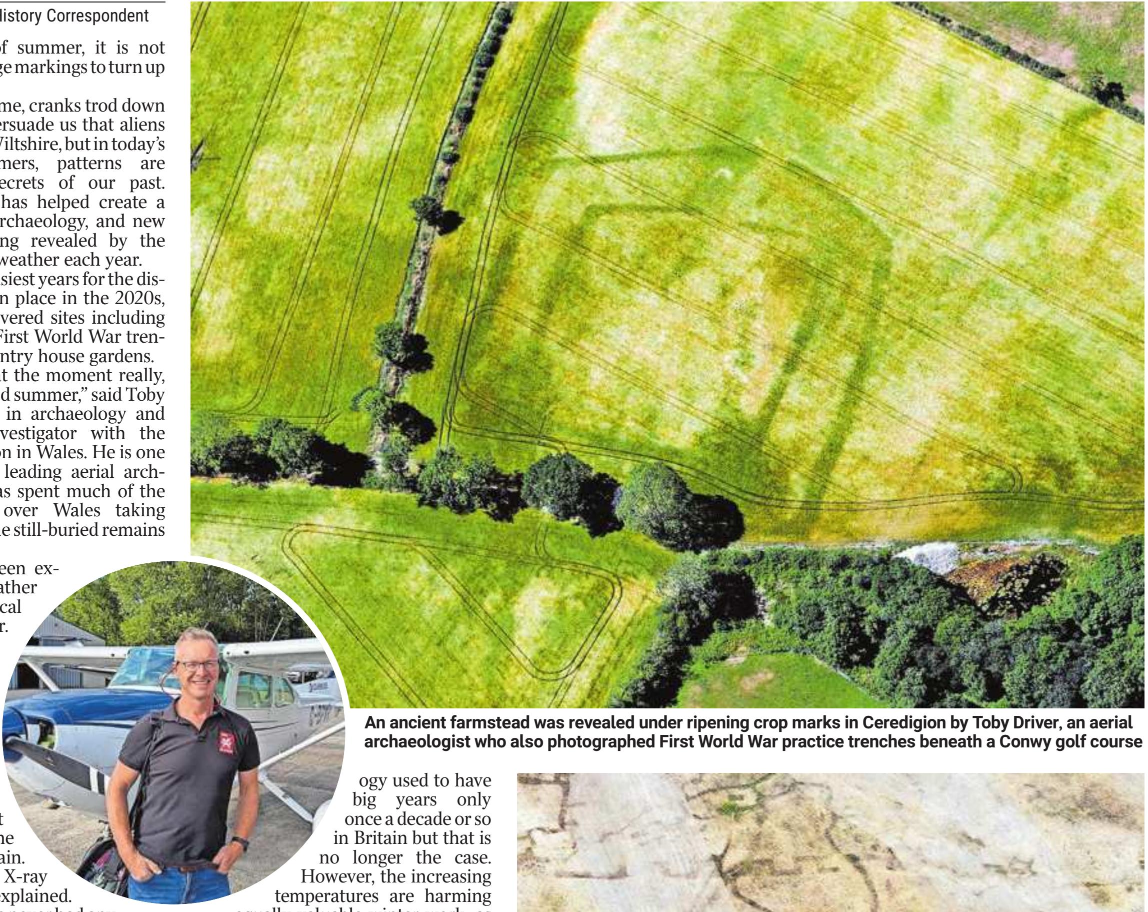
Alongside tweaking its product range, Blue Diamond is also redesigning beds where plants are sold to include water reservoirs and formulating peat-free compost that is better at retaining moisture. Many in the industry used to rely on peat-based composts, which are more effective at water retention, but these are being phased out in the UK due to their impact on local habitats and carbon emissions.

Blue Diamond will likely fare better amid weather-related headwinds than many smaller garden centre groups given an increasing focus on its hospitality, clothing and home retail offerings in recent years.

Prison gardens cultivate hope, page 14
Heatwaves could change food, page 28

Aerial archaeologists reap rich harvest from dry land

Jack Blackburn History Correspondent



DR TOBY DRIVER/ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS FOR WALES

An ancient farmstead was revealed under ripening crop marks in Ceredigion by Toby Driver, an aerial archaeologist who also photographed First World War practice trenches beneath a Conwy golf course

In the middle of summer, it is not unusual for strange markings to turn up in Britain's fields.

Once upon a time, cranks trod down crops to try to persuade us that aliens were moving to Wiltshire, but in today's sweltering summers, patterns are revealing the secrets of our past. Climate change has helped create a boom in aerial archaeology, and new features are being revealed by the increasingly dry weather each year.

Five of the 11 busiest years for the discipline have taken place in the 2020s, with newly discovered sites including Iron Age farms, First World War trenches and lost country house gardens.

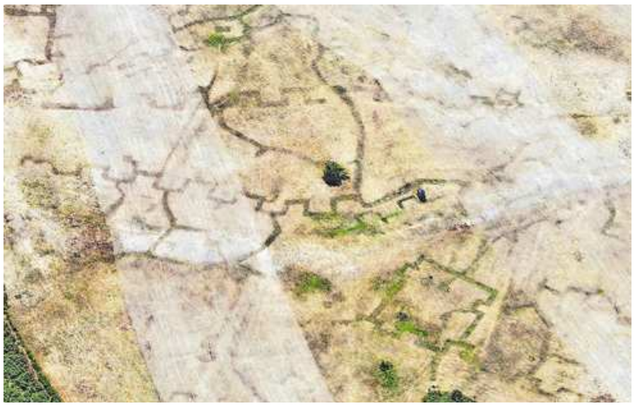
"It's just nuts at the moment really, but it's been a good summer," said Toby Driver, a doctor in archaeology and senior aerial investigator with the Royal Commission in Wales. He is one of the country's leading aerial archaeologists and has spent much of the summer flying over Wales taking photographs of the still-buried remains of our past.

The link between extremely dry weather and archaeological success is clear. Parched crops and grass dry at different rates according to what is beneath them, meaning that walls, trenches, mounds and other features lost in the soil become apparent once again.

"You get this X-ray effect," Driver explained. "If these sites have never had any geophysical surveys or any excavations then it's our one chance, in a week or two of every decade, before the rain comes and when the drought's sufficiently deep, to get these marks recorded."

The big discovery in Britain this year was a lost garden at Chatsworth House, but Driver's pictures have included the Caerhun Roman fort in Conwy, First World War practice trenches in nearby Deganwy and prehistoric sites in Ceredigion and Welshpool. Aerial archaeology used to have big years only once a decade or so in Britain but that is no longer the case. However, the increasing temperatures are harming equally valuable winter work, as snow and frost become rarer.

New technologies help source potential sites, including amateur drone photography and pictures posted on social media, but also pose challenges. Newly discovered sites need to be disguised and images selected carefully, as artificial intelligence can identify them and alert malicious actors, such as irresponsible metal detectorists, but aerial archaeology can be a cost-effective way of directing researchers to the best places to dig.



'Tinderbox' Britain fears as heatwave five arrives

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor
Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

England and Wales suffered a record number of wildfires last month, and officials fear more devastation this week when a fifth summer heatwave arrives.

Firefighters attended 395 wildfires in the three weeks to July 31, bringing the 2026 total to more than 710. Whitehall officials are monitoring the figures amid fears the "whole country is like one giant tinderbox".

A source said: "The summers of 2022 and 2025 were bad but not a patch on this year. There is increased monitoring of national resilience data especially after the Suffolk fire, which required resources from across the country."

The blaze in Suffolk burnt 257 acres of National Trust heathland. Maps by Natural England report a "very high" risk of fires in large parts of England and Wales from today. The level rises to "exceptional" in East Anglia, the south and the southeast on Thursday, when temperatures may hit 36C.

A major incident was declared yesterday as 14 crews tackled separate fires near Mansfield. A fire broke out at Strawberry Hill Heath on Saturday, with 12 crews attending. About 36,000 square metres of woodland and undergrowth have been affected. Six engines and a water carrier were deployed to a blaze at Sherwood Pines yesterday.

Phil Garrigan, chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, said "wildfires are no longer isolated events". He added: "We have responded to more than 700 wildfires this year, and every one places additional pressure on firefighters and fire and rescue services. These fires can burn for days, challenging terrain and extreme temperatures. They demand significant resources, tie up crews for prolonged periods and reduce opportunities for firefighters to rest between incidents."

Full forecast, page 43

Warnings over fatal cat falls in hot weather

Animal charities have warned cat owners living on the first floor of a building or above that their pets could risk fatal falls during the hot weather.

Cases of "high-rise syndrome", whereby a cat suffers injuries in a fall from height, tend to spike during summer months as indoor pets are tempted outside by warmer temperatures, birds and movement, according to Cats Protection and Blue Cross.

The charities warned owners against leaving windows and balconies open and unattended. Blue Cross animal hospitals in London and Grimsby have already treated 33 cats this year for injuries suffered in a fall.

Izzy Hocking, a veterinary engagement manager at Cats Protection, said: "Depending on the height it falls from, a cat could suffer severe injuries such as broken limbs, jaw fractures and internal trauma including brain damage. In some cases, falls can prove fatal or result in euthanasia."

Alliah Seed's three-month-old kitten Sapphire was "very lucky" to suffer only a fractured toe after falling from a fifth-floor window ledge.

Student 'treated like villain' over cyber-flaw

Mark Sellman Technology Correspondent

When Mikey Whiston, an A-level student, found a cybersecurity flaw in a national education platform, he thought he would be hailed as a hero. Instead, he says, he was treated like a villain.

Mikey, 17, from Birmingham, noticed the flaw while doing research for his computer science course. It threatened to expose millions of student records, bank statements and school information. But instead of exploiting this, he tried to warn the company.

Unable to report the problem, Mikey sent a password-protected video to the company's helpdesk. A few days later it phoned back. "It wasn't exactly a very nice [call], to say the least," Mikey says.

The company, which Mikey is not naming, was threatening and dismissive, he said. The platform said his actions could jeopardise the subscription that his school, Arthur Terry, had and suggested the flaw was not too serious.

"I just wanted them to say 'OK, we'll fix it'. I didn't want anything in return. I just wanted to fix this," he said.

Four months later and the problem had not been fixed. So Mikey reported it to GC3, the government's cybersecurity co-ordination centre, which confirmed it was a critical flaw. The National Cyber Security Centre presented him with a challenge coin award.

Mikey Whiston, 17, said the company was threatening and dismissive

Mikey was bruised by the experience but wanted to publicise it so other organisations encourage ethical, or white-hat, hackers to highlight vulnerabilities.

"The thing I most want is for the talents of security researchers … to help secure infrastructure … but we can't really make that happen if companies are going to be so resistant," he said.

Mikey's tale is familiar, according to Conor Freeman, 26, a former hacker from Ireland who was jailed in 2020 for stealing cryptocurrency. He said: "I found a vulnerability in the largest car-sharing app in Ireland that allowed me to expose every user in their database. It took me three emails to get someone to care and when I got through to the chief information security officer I didn't even get a thank you. It's a big problem."

Ruby Farr, associate director of the Child Online Harms Policy Think Tank, said: "When legitimate disclosure is met with suspicion, delay or silence, the same skill and curiosity that could serve the public good is left with nowhere sanctioned to go, and illegal routes can become tempting."

Fergus Hay, co-founder of the Hacking Games, which channels young talent into cybersecurity, said: "We have to stop looking at 17-year-olds as feckless and realise they are powerful, particularly if they are digitally native."

Mikey is on a Network Rail placement after winning one of their "hackathons", beating a Google team. He is set to finish A-levels in maths and further maths (he finished computer science a year early) and wants to build and secure national infrastructure.

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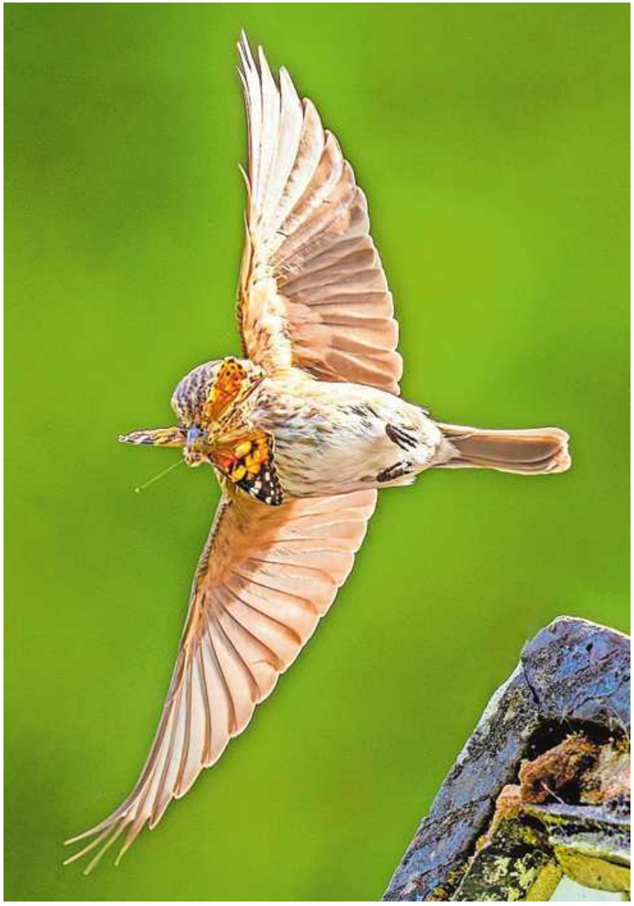


On the wing A spotted flycatcher heads to its nest with a painted lady butterfly

Record number will secure a university place this week

Georgia Lambert

A record number of teenagers is expected to win university places this summer as demand for higher education hits a new high, and a surge in politics, economics and law A-levels points to a shift in subjects they are choosing.

They will find out their A-level results this week, and the biggest ever cohort of 18-year-olds is predicted to win places at their first-choice university, according to Ucas.

"We're expecting this summer in clearing to see both record numbers accepting a place through clearing but also we probably will see record numbers applying direct to clearing," Jo Saxton, chief executive of Ucas, said last week.

Ofqual data shows that A-level entries have increased by 2.9 per cent from 821,875 last summer to 845,485 this year. Political studies was the fastest-growing mainstream A-level this year, with entries jumping 13.1 per cent to 23,560 students. Law is close behind, climbing 11.6 per cent to 16,090, and economics rose 10.7 per cent to 46,365.

Mathematics remains the most popular A-level, with almost 110,000 entries, up 3.9 per cent on last year. English language entries have also increased by 4 per cent. History enjoyed an increase of 5.4 per cent, while psychology, biology and chemistry all recorded steady gains.

Spanish entries rose by 1 per cent, French was unchanged and German was up by 3.1 per cent. English literature entries fell by 5.8 per cent to 32,890; drama and music were also down.

There are a total of 29,731 courses available through clearing across 315 institutions, The Times has found.

Expats build new property firms in UAE

Jack Simpson Money Reporter

One in five new buy-to-let businesses set up by UK expatriates are run from the United Arab Emirates.

The estate agency Hamptons found that more than 7,500 firms have been set up this year by UK citizens living abroad, with 17 per cent based in the UAE, in places such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi. This was up from 11 per cent ten years ago, when 2,157 buy-to-let companies were set up by expats.

David Fell, from Hamptons, said the Middle and Far East were often attractive places to move to while still owning property in the UK because of the tax advantages. He said: "These tend to be low-tax environments favoured by high earners in their twenties and thirties.

"While many older landlords still own homes in their own names, expat investors have typically started building their rental portfolio under a company structure."

There is no income or capital gains tax in the UAE, but it does impose VAT of 5 per cent on purchases and corporate tax of 9 per cent on business profits. The UAE has the highest proportion of buy-to-let businesses run by UK citizens. The United States had the second-highest share at 9 per cent and Singapore third at nearly 8 per cent. Saudi Arabia was the Middle Eastern nation with the second-highest proportion at 5 per cent.

The UAE has been at the top of the list for the past decade.

Fell said: "The numbers suggest that many expat investors heading east aren't full-time landlords; rather, they are building a portfolio on the side of a high-earning day job. The list of destinations also indicates that these investors are younger than the average landlord, who is now about 60 and closely tied to their property portfolio."

EDDIE MITCHELL

On edge Visitors to Birling Gap near Eastbourne have been reminded to keep a safe distance after people crossed a boundary rope to walk on the chalk clifftop

Sunset for the soft-top? Driveways fill with SUVs

Andrew Ellson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

The country's love affair with open-top motoring is at risk of becoming little more than a nostalgic memory. The image of a carefree couple heading for the coast with the roof folded neatly into the boot has been replaced by something altogether taller, heavier and more practical: the family SUV.

The latest figures show that sales of new convertible cars have collapsed by almost 90 per cent in the space of two decades, leaving what was once one of Britain's favourite motoring indulgences fighting for survival.

Only 11,484 new soft-tops were registered in Britain last year, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, down from a peak of nearly 110,000 in 2005. The rate of decline has accelerated since 2022, when 16,500 convertibles were sold. Only one in every 200 cars sold in the UK last year was a convertible compared with about one in every 20 in 2005.

The collapse has been mirrored by a dramatic retreat from manufacturers.

Vauxhall, Toyota, Peugeot, Citroën, Honda, Jaguar and Lexus have all withdrawn from the market. Even Audi, which had huge success with its A5 Cabriolet, TT Roadster and R8 Spyder, no longer offers a drop top.

Brands that still offer convertibles have slimmed down their ranges. Mercedes-Benz has replaced separate C-Class and E-Class cabriolets with the CLE Cabriolet, and BMW's line-up is largely confined to the 4 Series Convertible alongside the ageing Z4 roadster.

One of the defining motoring images of the 1990s that helped drive the boom in soft-tops was of Diana, Princess of Wales, behind the wheel of her green Audi 80 Cabriolet. Today far fewer celebrities are photographed in convertibles, although some enthusiasts remain, including Brooklyn Beckham, who was given a Jaguar XK Convertible as a wedding present by his father, David; Rod Stewart, who owns a Ferrari F50; and Simon Cowell, who drives a Rolls-Royce Dawn.

For buyers still determined to drive with the roof down, the choice is becoming increasingly expensive. An entry-level Mazda MX-5 starts at about £28,500. A Mini Cooper Convertible costs from about £29,000 and a Mercedes CLE Cabriolet begins at about £55,000. At the higher end of the market, a Porsche 911 Cabriolet costs well into six figures.

One of the reasons for the decline in sales is that the country's driveways are instead filling with 4x4s and crossovers. Once confined largely to farmers and off-road enthusiasts, they have become the default choice for everyone from young families to celebrities, offering higher driving positions, greater practicality and enough space to serve as the household's only car.

Simon England, founder of ALA Insurance, said: "High production costs, combined with weak sales, mean there's little appetite for innovation in this segment."

There are wider social changes at work too. During the convertible boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s, they became familiar sights on the roads. Indeed, despite our unpredictable and rainy weather, the UK consistently bought more soft-tops than almost any other European country. They were aspirational but attainable, often bought as weekend cars or by empty-nesters.

But today, motorists are less willing to own a second vehicle. Persistently high living costs have forced households to prioritise practicality.

At the same time, the transition towards electric vehicles has favoured SUVs, whose larger dimensions make packaging heavy battery packs far easier than in low-slung sports cars.

Charge your hybrid cars more often to end reliance on petrol

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

Ministers will examine how to encourage drivers of plug-in hybrid cars to charge them more frequently and not rely on conventional fuels.

About one in five owners of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs), which combine a conventional petrol or diesel engine with an electric motor and rechargeable battery, have no access to home charging, according to the Department for Transport (DfT).

The DfT will launch a consultation this week on relaxing strict rules on the sale of electric vehicles, including a "significant section" on plug-in hybrids.

A source said: "There is a recognition that PHEVs will play a major role in the transition to battery power but there are concerns over how often drivers are actually charging them and also about their real-world CO_2 impact."

Research by the European Commission found that PHEVs emitted 3.5 times more CO_2 in real-world driving than their official figures, largely because they were not being charged and driven electrically as often as assumed. It analysed data collected automatically by onboard fuel consumption monitoring systems in 320,000 plug-in hybrid cars.

Labour has pledged to ban the sale of pure-petrol and diesel cars from 2030. Hybrids will be permitted until 2035. While the headline position will not change, ministers are considering relaxing the zero-emission vehicle mandate, which stipulates how many e-cars must be sold each year. The mandate requires 33 per cent of new vehicles sold this year to be pure-electric. It rises gradually to 80 per cent in 2030.

One option being examined is to cut that level significantly, potentially to 50 per cent, meaning half of vehicles sold by the end of the decade could still have a petrol engine and a battery. Another option is to increase the flexibilities available to manufacturers who are unable to fulfil the sales thresholds.

Research for the DfT, published in April, found that 21 per cent of PHEV drivers could not charge at home and relied on the public charging network, up from 12 per cent in 2024; 46 per cent had a dedicated home charger.

Senior industry figures agree that more needs to be done to encourage drivers of PHEVs to charge them more frequently because "the technology only works as intended if drivers understand how to use it".

Carmakers have lobbied for the rules to be relaxed, arguing organic demand for EVs is lower than forecast when the mandate was devised. The government said: "We've always said we'll review the mandate to support British industry and investment. Further details will be published in due course."

Student paper silent on Arday plagiarism row that went global

Georgia Lambert

The University of Cambridge student newspaper has yet to cover the row surrounding Jason Arday despite it becoming an international news story.

The newspaper, Varsity, also rejected an opinion piece on the issue from a student. An email chain shared with The Times shows that Elizabeth Spring, 20, pitched an article titled "Cambridge is culpable for plagiarism row" last Tuesday. It was initially accepted but was later rejected, she was told, because a Varsity staff writer had a piece "ready to be published" that made a similar argument.

However, the paper, which operates independently of and free of financial control by the university, has yet to publish any coverage of the row surrounding Arday, who became Cambridge's youngest black professor when, aged 37, he was appointed in 2023.

Jason Arday at his PhD ceremony at Liverpool John Moores University

Arday resigned on Wednesday as professor of sociology of education at Cambridge. The university began an investigation last week into his qualifications and honorary appointments, and he faces allegations that he plagiarised parts of his PhD thesis and other research. Arday has denied academic fraud. An investigation at Liverpool John Moores University cleared him of wrongdoing. He is also accused of exaggerating claims about sporting and fundraising achievements.

Two events promoting Arday's memoir, *Great and Unfortunate Things*, which is due out in the UK on August 27, have been cancelled. Arday was due to take part in a "fireside chat" at an event organised by the Royal Geographical Society next month. The society's website says the "session has been cancelled at the request of the speaker".

An event at Topping & Company Booksellers in Edinburgh, where Arday was due to discuss his memoir, has also been cancelled.

Spring, a theology student at Girton College, said Varsity's decision not to cover the row may have reflected "a reluctance to write about a story associated with the far right". It may also have been influenced by the paper's criticism of Nathan Cofnas, an academic who raised plagiarism allegations against Arday, she suggested.

Cofnas, who describes himself as a "race realist", was dismissed from his Cambridge role in 2024 and Varsity has published criticism of his views on race.

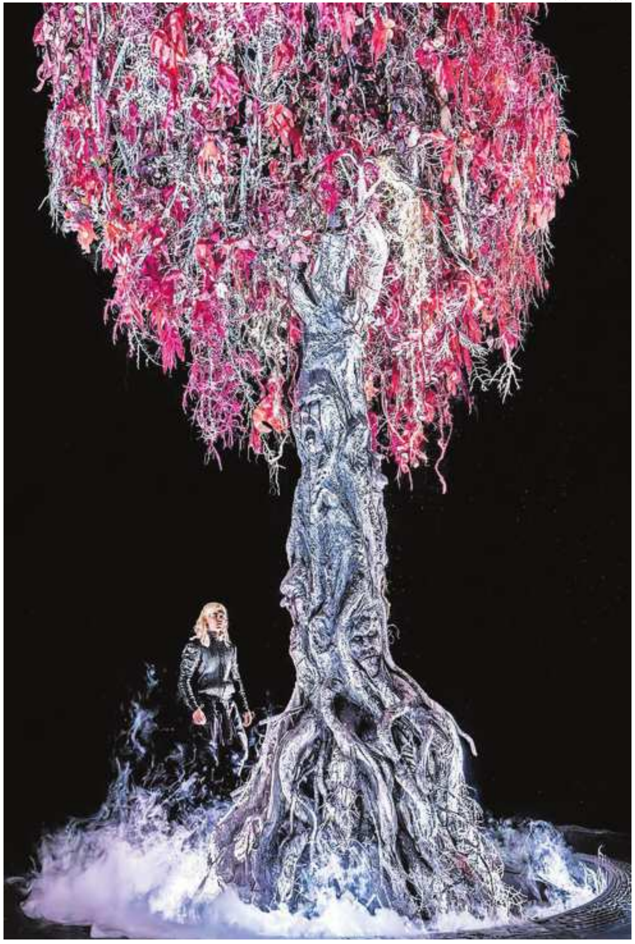
The Times approached Varsity for comment.

Spring published her piece on Substack. It argues that Cambridge's handling of the allegations was a "total failure" that allowed the matter to spiral into a wider culture war.

"What the chaotic unfolding of events has revealed is a total failure by the university at large to respond to allegations of academic misconduct in a thoughtful way," she wrote. "In particular, the highly distressing snowball effect of the investigation into his academic work spilling into questions about his personal life could have been avoided if Cambridge had conducted a prompt and thorough investigation at the time when allegations were first raised several years ago." She also criticised Cambridge for defending Arday before it had fully examined the evidence.

Fawning liberals laid ground for Arday farce, Trevor Phillips, page 17

JOHAN PERSSON



Noah Ritter as Prince Rhaegar in Dominic Cooke's stage prequel to the TV series

Plodding Westeros marathon is only for the most devoted

Theatre Clive Davis

Game of Thrones: The Mad King (220min)
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon
★★★☆☆

This prequel to a blood-soaked dynastic saga wanders on for so long that it makes Christopher Nolan's journey into Greek mythology seem a model of understatement. There's no reason why the RSC shouldn't bring George RR Martin's epic books to the stage in *Game of Thrones: The Mad King*, but if Dominic Cooke's stolid production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre gives hardcore *GoT* fans a chance to hunt for "Easter eggs", it seldom comes close to matching the grim aura of the TV series.

If you're of a sensitive disposition, you'll be relieved to hear there's no chance of a severed head landing in your lap. The sex, too, has been toned down. This family-friendly pagan venture has *War Horse*-style puppetry and stylised battle sequences that hint at mayhem without resorting to oceans of gore. And if you need a helping hand, the programme provides a family tree that sets out the tangle of bloodlines as the clans gather for the Great Tourney of Harrenhal, the event that sets off the remorseless cycle of retribution.

You can see why Martin's admirers detect parallels with Shakespeare's history plays. The novels, after all, draw on similar internecine dynamics. Sadly, Duncan Macmillan's script is sorely lacking in poetry. Events plod forward, one after the other, and although Michael Shaeffer is utterly compelling as the cruel and chronically unstable monarch Aerys, other performances seem nuance-free. Too many lines are simply shouted. You expect better of the RSC.

Chloe Lamford's cross-shaped set design, dominated by a huge arch, is undeniably eye-catching. As the piece develops, though, that unorthodox format begins to cramp the drama. An iron throne appears at one end, but the minimal scenery leaves you focusing on costumes that look surprisingly cheap and combat scenes which, using all too familiar slow-motion techniques, soon begin to pall.

Perhaps it all looks more imposing from higher up in the auditorium. All I can say is that, sitting in the stalls next to the runways, I was distracted by the close-up view of the puppeteers controlling the otherwise impressive jousting horses created by Nick Barnes and Finn Caldwell. It's similarly off-putting to see technicians wielding larger-than-life suits of armour in battles.

Callum Woodhouse brings ample swagger to the role of Robert Baratheon. Harmony Rose-Bremner gives us a defiant Lyanna Stark. As the young Eddard, the diminutive Michael Abubakar could not form more of a contrast to the brooding, granite-faced ruler portrayed by Sean Bean on the small screen. It goes without saying that there are more than enough *GoT* devotees to keep the box office ticking over for the rest of eternity, but only the most dedicated of them will have the energy for this marathon.

To September 5, rsc.org.uk

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Steam railways switch to diesel as coal costs rise

Marieta Marinova

A day trip on a heritage railway is a staple of the British summer for many families. This year, however, many are finding themselves hauled by diesel locomotives rather than steam engines, as heatwaves and rising coal prices force operators to turn to alternatives.

Wildfire risks from spark-emitting engines and concerns for the wellbeing of staff have led heritage lines to either suspend steam services or run hybrid timetables blending steam and diesel.

For the volunteer-led team at Swanage Railway in Dorset, substituting one of the steam services for diesel was a difficult decision. "It's not what our passengers want," said Ben Ford, the chairman. "They want a steam engine at the front of their trains, but we are struggling to afford it. The cheapest, good quality steam coal available to us was coming from Russia, but since the Ukraine war that hasn't been possible."

Importing the fossil fuel from places as far as Colombia and Australia meant the cost of running the railway between Norden and Swanage almost quadrupled. "Before the war, we were looking at around £100 a tonne. Now it is closer to £400," Ford said. Depending on mileage, Swanage steam engines consume between two and four tonnes of coal a day.

The railway relies on 32 paid staff and 450 volunteers, who welcomed some 200,000 visitors last year. To keep operations viable, the line now runs a split timetable of one steam train alongside a diesel service.

A number of heritage operators, including Keighley & Worth Valley Railway in West Yorkshire, the Watercress Line in Alresford, Hampshire, and Middleton Railway in south Leeds, have implemented similar measures or halted steam temporarily.

While some struggle with the price of coal, others are disappointed by the quality they receive. Adam Giles, chairman of Northampton Steam Railway, said: "It is nowhere near what we used to get from Ffos-y-fran, which was absolutely brilliant." Ffos-y-fran in south Wales, the UK's last opencast coal mine, ceased operations in 2023.

"It's the size of coal as well," Giles said. "Anything too small doesn't work in the engines, it will just fall through the grate." As Colombian coal travels thousands of miles on ships, it degrades before reaching Northampton and "sometimes may even just be dust".

Giles said that "we would normally run steam from the beginning of July until September, but the last month or so it has been diesel every weekend", with staff wellbeing the No 1 priority, as cab temperatures frequently pass 40C. "It is a massive ask expecting someone to shovel a tonne and a half of coal inside what is effectively a sauna for a whole day," he added.

But even diesel offers little financial refuge, Rebecca Dalley, chief executive of the Watercress Line, said. "Almost every day we think whether we would cover the costs of our lovely but rather expensive heritage railway," she said.

Heritage railways are increasingly looking at add-ons. Dalley said: "We've put on a special train to go and watch the solar eclipse on August 12 ... We have Thomas the Tank Engine [events] on at the moment, we'll have Santa events and we do dining experiences."

Ian Smith, vice-president of the Middleton Railway Trust, said it was also proving harder to recruit volunteers. "Railway preservation has depended on people who are early retirees looking for something to do. But we don't get those now as the pension age has been going up and up." He added that "younger people are not as attracted to railways as they used to be".

Despite the challenges this summer, Steve Oates, chief executive of the Heritage Railway Association, said that no heritage operator had ceased operations. "It is becoming increasingly difficult to think how we are going to keep this priceless cultural heritage operating," he said. "But heritage railways are still massively popular attractions, and they are all working very hard to think of new ways to attract customers."

TOM MCATEE/BAV MEDIA

Locomotives cross the Brooksbottom Viaduct near Bury, Greater Manchester. Some heritage rail lines have halted steam services temporarily over the cost of coal, wildfire risks and the temperature in cabs during heatwaves

First osprey chicks hatch at RSPB reserve in England

The RSPB is celebrating after ospreys bred at one of its nature reserves in England for the first time.

A pair of the birds of prey successfully hatched three chicks at Campfield Marsh, a wetland on the shores of the Solway Firth in Cumbria, in June.

Ospreys, which are a large fish-eating species typically seen over large bodies of water such as estuaries or lakes, overwinter in west Africa before flying to Europe to breed in the spring.

They were persecuted in the early 20th century, but returned to Scotland in the 1950s and have recolonised other parts of the UK. Campfield Marsh has an osprey platform to attract the birds and the adults who have nested there are thought to be first-time parents.

The male was ringed in Dumfries in 2021 but the female had no ring. Eggs were laid between April 30 and May 6 and the chicks hatched in June.

The RSPB's Mhairi Maclauchlan said: "We were on tenterhooks after the eggs were laid until they hatched. There was huge collective sigh of relief when they did. Osprey parents are surprisingly tender despite their large size."

She added that ospreys were loyal birds and often returned to the same breeding ground.

Eggs laid in spring hatched in June

Cadbury
the taste of a glass and a half

ANDREW FOX FOR THE TIMES

HMP Birmingham grows vegetables for food banks and flowers for its fences

Hope blooms for inmates at work in prison garden

Sanchez Manning
Social Affairs Correspondent

Manicured flowerbeds filled with colourful displays of marigolds, geraniums and roses are punctuated with lush green ferns and shaded by the overhanging branches of apple trees. For a moment one might mistake it for a bucolic corner of Kew Gardens. But a quick glance at the huge steel fences and the reality sets in — this leafy oasis is inside HMP Birmingham.

It is one of two impressive gardens created by prisoners that are part of a Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) programme to grow vegetables for local food banks.

For the inmates, the scheme is also a key mental health lifeline. A number of the men entering HMP Birmingham, a category B prison that has hosted Fred West, the Birmingham Six and Ozzy Osbourne, suffer from debilitating mental health problems that pre-date their imprisonment, the prisoners said. The gardens, the inmates stated, were one of the few places of respite.

Working in the gardens can be transformative, said the prison guard Amin Faraji, who organises the work. He told of how one prisoner, 29, who is severely autistic and has a mental age of four to six, went from being effectively mute when he first entered the prison to speaking freely after he began gardening.

“Now his confidence has come up and he talks all the time,” Faraji said. “On the outside an old couple looked after him who had an allotment, so he was used to being in the allotment and it made sense for him to be here.”

A 59-year-old inmate who had grown sweet peas, peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers said that the garden had helped with his psychosis and depression. “It’s a godsend being in here really,” he said. “The system is crumbling and there’s no cohesive treatment for people like me. You can relax in the garden and find your own space. I’m more green-fingered now than I’ve ever been. The best part is getting out of the cells. Being locked up is like being trapped in your own mind.”

One prisoner, 42, from Brazil, had also grown flowers and vegetables, as well as building planters. “It’s bedlam on the wing,” he said. “You come out here and you’re living again.” Under the RHS prison garden programme, which is run in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice and also operates in prisons in Manchester and Liverpool, inmates grow vegetable “plugs” — young starter plants grown from seed — that are passed on to community gardens who continue the growing process to fruition. The harvested vegetables are then distributed to charities and food banks.

Inmates are allowed to work in the gardens for a few hours in the morning and then a couple of hours later on, sometimes every day in the summer. But to be given this “privilege” they must pass the highest level of security.

“They have to go through an interview process,” Clare Sidaway, head of education, skills and work at HMP Birmingham, said. “Anyone who’s been in possession of a weapon or is detoxing cannot be involved and they can’t have any negative marks.”

Faraji, who has worked as a “land-based instructor” in the prison garden for three years, said his aim was for prisoners to grow 1,500 vegetable plugs for the RHS programme per year.

Faraji admitted that he got as much out of the garden as the inmates did. “I used to be an officer on a wing, but coming out to work in the garden has been a lot more meaningful, not just for the prisoners but for me as well,” he said.

Sidaway added: “It’s about the ability of nature to give the men purposeful activity. If a man is engaged in purposeful activity, he is less likely to reoffend.” She said the prison was planning a third garden with a polytunnel.

Sarah Galvin, head of national community programmes at the RHS, said the programme was a win for everyone. “Working with local prisons means community gardens can jump-start their growing while also promoting green skills and helping in the rehabilitation of the prison community.”

Cringeworthy public displays are sign of healthy romance

Victoria Allen

Public displays of affection are all the rage among celebrity couples such as the singer Dua Lipa and her actor husband, Callum Turner.

While some may frown, such overt displays are linked to greater happiness in relationships, a study suggests.

Researchers asked 461 people to rate how strongly they engaged in a list of public displays of affection (PDA), which included holding hands, hugging and kissing in public, and declaring their love in front of family and friends.

People who engaged in more PDAs were found to have greater relationship satisfaction. However, the study, published in the scientific journal Plos One, also found that people who were affectionate more often privately had even higher relationship satisfaction.

The study found the link between PDAs and relationship satisfaction across people in Poland, Indonesia and Nepal, which have different attitudes towards the acceptability of PDAs. It led the researchers to conclude it may be important for people’s relationship happiness across cultures.

Dagna Kocur of the University of Silesia in Poland, who led the study, said: “Affectionate behaviour is one of the ways people communicate closeness, love and emotional connection.

“Even small everyday gestures like holding hands, hugging or kissing can help partners feel valued, emotionally secure, and connected to each other.”

There is evidence that people deprived of affection are more at risk of depression, anxiety and health problems. Those in the study were aged 18 to 49. To further investigate whether affection causes happier relationships, the academics will next examine PDA in a larger group of 1,000 people across nine countries, including the UK.

Previous research has found women show affection more frequently than men, and that men often prefer kissing, while women prefer hugging.

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Hard day's knights put stress to the sword

Getting medieval on friends wearing full armour is the new way to unwind after work, **Sam Blackett** discovers

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Members of the Invicta Medieval Combat group fight at a festival in West Sussex, and try to stay cool. The steel weapons are blunted but the broken bones are real

When Alistair Dean gets home from work as a tree officer, he changes out of his suit and puts on his steel armour.

On Wednesday evenings and the odd weekend, the 37-year-old is a modern-day knight, taking part in the full-contact sport buhurt — from the old French verb *béhourd* ("to wallop") — where teams of up to 150 fighters face off in head-to-toe medieval armour.

"I genuinely believe this is better than therapy," he said. "Nothing says midweek therapy, when your boss has been a bit of an idiot to you, like coming out and knocking seven lumps out of your best mate. It's a good stress buster."

Buhurt has one goal: take your opponent to the ground, be that by using mixed martial arts or smashing opponents with heavy steel swords, axes or maces.

Dean is one of the top warriors at Invicta Medieval Combat, one of the dozens of teams competing at Loxwood Joust over the first three weekends of August.

The event is part of a medieval festival in West Sussex, which is where Sophie Wills, a 32-year-old digital project manager, first "fell in love" with the sport. She joins weekly Invicta training sessions in London.

"I often come to work with some bruises and other bits," she said. "Luckily all of my colleagues know what I do."

While buhurt, which was officially recognised as a sport in 2013, gained social media fame through its costume and novelty image, its representatives are eager to shake off the theatrical label.

"People see the armour and they see the swords and they think it's either re-enactment or Larp [live-action role play] where it's all fake and it's choreographed. And it isn't," Dean said. "We're not out to make-believe. When people get hit and they go down, it's because they are hurt."

The sport operates under strict regulations, and weapons are required to meet "bluntness" standards while combat rules are policed by international governing bodies. Beyond the physical toll — broken bones and concussions are common — buhurt can demand large financial investment. A full set of competition-legal armour costs up to £6,000.

Dean thinks events such as Loxwood are a step towards buhurt gaining mass appeal. "I think more people need to be involved in their history," Dean said. "And if this is a doorway to allow people into history, then that's great."

Whitney Houston Barbie doll reminds us how she used to be

Lara Bowman

Whitney Houston has joined the starry pantheon of singers who have been immortalised as Barbie dolls.

Clad in a lilac bodycon midi dress and white and blue heels, with her face framed by a halo of curls and rainbow drop earrings, Houston's doll joins the ranks of Diana Ross, Stevie Nicks and Kylie Minogue.

Released yesterday, on what would have been the singer's 63rd birthday, the doll mimics the singer's outfit from the 1987 music video for *I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)*, which helped to catapult her to global stardom, and comes with a miniature microphone stand.

It is the latest in a series of honours recognising Houston's 40-year musical legacy, including the Recording Academy's Special Merit Lifetime Achievement Award.

The doll was created with the help of Pat Houston, the singer's sister-in-law and executor of her estate, who said that it had been decades in the making. "Whitney had never really endorsed anything, and we started having conversations about her brand ... we talked about a Mattel doll 20 years ago," she told People magazine. She added that the late singer had "really wanted to invest time" in a doll that celebrated her role in the 1992 film *The Bodyguard* and its towering rendition of *I Will Always Love You*.

The doll was released on the late singer's birthday

The outfit choice was a "no-brainer", Pat said, adding that Mattel had nailed every detail "down to the earrings, to the colour of the hair, to the colour of the dress, to the details on the shoes".

Nathan Baynard, the vice-president and head of Barbie at Mattel, said: "Whitney Houston's music has been the soundtrack to countless moments for fans around the world. Barbie is proud to honour her extraordinary legacy." He added that the doll "celebrates [Houston's] unmistakable style, joy and spirit".

The singer joins a signature series that also includes Tina Turner, Miley Cyrus, Gloria Estefan and David Bowie and the Mexican singer Juan Gabriel.The honour is not taken for granted: Minogue marvelled at her doll and said that "Baby Kylie would NOT believe this is happening right now".

Houston won six Grammy awards and sold close to 200 million records worldwide. She died in 2012 aged 48 in an accidental drowning in a bathtub.

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20mph speed limits play havoc with the mind
Libby Purves
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Fawning liberals laid ground for Arday farce

Many black professionals will now face false accusations that they owe advancement to colour rather than character

Trevor Phillips

@TREVORPTWEETS

In 1981 an ambitious young staffer on the Washington Post reported the story of an eight-year-old heroin addict, whom she called "Jimmy". She claimed to have watched him injecting and described the "needle marks" in his "thin brown arms". Janet Cooke's story led the paper's front page. The Post's star reporter, Bob Woodward of Watergate fame, submitted Cooke's report for a Pulitzer prize, which she duly won.

Cooke refused to divulge Jimmy's true identity. Within days it became clear why. The story was fake. But it was the inconsistencies in Cooke's account of her own background that set the hounds on her trail, rather than any suspicions about the story itself. For example, she claimed to speak four foreign languages, but was unable to respond coherently to questions in any of them. Cooke eventually admitted to fabricating the piece, as well as to embellishing her CV, and resigned.

She disappeared from public life, but the story was begging to be fictionalised; the Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez quipped that while it may have been unfair that she won the Pulitzer, it was even more unfair that she didn't win the Nobel prize for literature.

It will become apparent sooner or later whether Jason Arday should compete for the Booker prize. It may be that he is an innocent abroad, manipulated by wokeist radicals into telling a story he thought they wanted to hear. Or it could turn out that he is a world-class grifter who spotted the opportunity to exploit the compassion of naive liberals.

What is evident in both Arday's case and that of Cooke is that their fictions were far too readily accepted by a mostly white, liberal establishment. Both of them told everyone the story they wanted to hear. Cooke subsequently admitted that she concocted her story because she knew that unless she gave her bosses what they wanted, latent prejudice in the industry would ensure she never got off the "urban" stories beat. Arday, apparently bemused, told a reporter: "To be honest with you, I thought you would just believe me. Why would I lie?"

Arday is professionally ruined, even if Hollywood does step in with lucrative compensation for the rights to the tale of his downfall. The hue and cry will already have been devastating for him. But I find it hard to be too sympathetic. He will have changed employers' risk calculus and will, I believe, cost many worthy academics their next promotion. And the brutal truth is that he must have known that the academic, media and political classes' gushing embrace of his mediocre talent owed everything to his colour and nothing to his capability. No black person wants to be a diversity hire, but we all know when it's coming our way.

> Arday will cost many worthy academics their next promotion

The outstanding American military leader of his generation, Colin Powell, later US secretary of state, said that he'd be damned if he would become "the poster child for the brothers or for guilty white liberals", but even he, in part, knew when he benefited from his race. Many will be wondering whether their workmates now believe that they owe advancement, not to what Martin Luther King would have called the content of their character, but the colour of its packaging.

True racists will be cock-a-hoop. Arday's principal prosecutor, Nathan Cofnas, a former Cambridge researcher, averred that in a true meritocracy black people would "disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment". Though bigots like Cofnas should not be prevented from saying what they think, no university should be required to associate itself with such bilge.

And Cofnas's implication of racial bias towards blacks is simply wrong. Story after story asserting that it has been deployed to the disadvantage of white people in universities, the armed forces, politics and elsewhere have been routinely disproved. And if there are such practices being commonly adopted, they are strikingly ineffective; about 270 out of some 24,000 professorial posts are held by black individuals. Yet, powered by the academic excellence of African immigrant families, about half of black 18-year-olds go to university, compared with less than 30 per cent of whites. These kids do not need affirmative action, they need a fair chance, and the Arday affair will deprive many of that opportunity.

JOSHUA BRATT FOR THE TIMES

Jason Arday's fictions will hurt the University of Cambridge's reputation

Any wider damage caused by Arday's alleged fictions won't be undone soon. The biggest casualty will be Cambridge's reputation: his departmental boss, Hilary Cremin, allowed herself to be filmed fawning over her new recruit, lauding his slim dossier of work as the "best in the world", apparently ignoring the groundbreaking research of figures such as Stanford's Thomas Sowell, Harvard's Lawrence Bobo, Yale's Elijah Anderson or Chicago's William Julius Wilson, or the insights of the doyenne of race and education research in Britain, Heidi Safia Mirza of University College London. Or maybe she has never heard of them, in which case how is it possible that she herself had been appointed?

If Arday is proved to have lied, these were lies that people not of his race either could not see or else feared to point out. Tracey Scott Wilson, the American author of an upcoming National Theatre play, *The Story*, inspired by the Janet Cooke scandal, told me last week that pretty much every black reporter in Washington could see the truth of Cooke's fiction instantly. "She talked about him having very expensive sneakers and clothes. And if you live in a drug den, you don't have expensive sneakers and clothes because you sell everything for drugs. That's the whole point of having a drug den."

The panel that selected Arday for his Cambridge job evidently bought his story lock, stock and barrel, as did his publishers and the many organisations that invited him to judge awards and competitions. But not one of them shared his background; just reading the account of, for example, his parents' behaviour, I think most black folks would have smelt a rat. There is a reason why that ethnic group outperforms all but Indians and Chinese students academically. They keep their children on a tight leash. Arday's Mami and Papa must be the only Ghanaians in Britain who somehow failed to notice when their son bunked off school to play snooker. I wouldn't have bought his story for a minute.

> I wouldn't have bought his story of school truancy for a minute

It will be impossible to stop those who have always wanted to turn back the clock from using Arday to prosecute their racial case. We will hear that there are too many people of colour in parliament, in academia, reading the news, even in advertisements and that too many appointments to high-profile roles are for show, meretricious rather than meritworthy. But the fact is, in a society where we still do not know each other as well as we might across the lines of race, if you want to spot the fakes, you may need more DEI, not less. Diversity in decision making is not the problem. It is the solution.

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Let's cut the Covid generation some slack

As they try to find jobs, we don't appreciate the scars lockdown left on swathes of teenagers

Cindy Yu

@CINDYXIAODANYU

The kids are not alright. More than a million of them are not in work, education or training. Many of those Neets aren't even looking for work. Jobs for graduates are down by 7 per cent since last year, while anxiety and depression are up 10 per cent since 2000.

Employers complain that they're having to look after the mental health of this generation more than they did before. They don't drink, they don't have sex, they're afraid of phone calls, even though they're never away from their phones.

The blame has been laid at various doors: TikTok, smartphones, over-therapising, over-diagnosing, the welfare state. Or it's indulgent parents, or lax teachers, or it's just that the kids themselves are simply too fragile. But in the entire discussion there is one conspicuous absence. Isn't it odd that we never talk about Covid any more?

You know, those two years of our lives spent in on-off lockdowns? PCR tests, vaccines, bubbles, the rule of six, whether a Scotch egg constitutes a substantial meal in a pub, and so on? This time six years ago, the first lockdown had just ended and we were eating out to help out. Five years ago, the "pingdemic" caused chaos by app. It was only four years ago that summer exams returned for the first time since 2019.

I still feel a shiver of dread when I think back to those times. Short of war, when has there ever been such an all-encompassing disruption to so many people's lives? In the years since then, normality has returned remarkably quickly. But a condition of that restoration seems to be an unspoken agreement to forget about the pandemic. We've developed collective amnesia.

Covid hasn't gone away, but who would bat an eyelid these days if they or someone they knew had it? Meanwhile, the extensive Covid inquiry rumbles on, now about halfway through publishing its reports. The detail with which it's looking at everything from test and trace to PPE is surely the kind of reckoning that we should want, to get closure for the way our lives were upturned. But I bet that you, like me, have been reluctant to properly engage with it. Doing so would mean thinking about those terrible times again.

> Online chat forums replaced hanging out together — and stuck

But this memory wipe also means there is too little discussion of the scars and bruises that were left. I think this is particularly the case for kids and teenagers, whose formative years were disrupted. Growing up is a time when you learn social cues, form your own identity, imagine your future career and start to make preparations to leave the nest. What's three years of working from home for a 50-year-old? But for a 15-year-old, it's a much bigger chunk of their life.

My brother was one of those 15-year-olds. He's now 21, fresh out of university, and technically a Neet. Lockdown hit in the first year of GCSEs, and from the rigorous demands of a very academic school to suddenly talking to his teachers on Zoom in his bedroom, he says that school became much, much easier. Some syllabuses were reduced, as teachers and exam boards worried about the disruption, grades were inflated as teacher assessments replaced real exams and, in this new, largely virtual world, it became much easier to cheat ("hypothetically", he hastens to add).

Outside of studying, there were none of the usual teenage antics. No parties, first dates, drinking in the park, loitering around the high street. These might sound trivial but all of this socialising quietly moulds a still-growing brain. It teaches teens how to behave with one another, how to set boundaries and who they are as people. Face-to-face time became online time — he and his friends did all their socialising on Discord, an audio chat forum akin to a virtual common room. That's still the main way they talk to each other now.

He's surprised when I tell him that when I was 15 my state comprehensive encouraged and helped us to use our holidays for unpaid work experience. I went to a local MP's constituency office, which was invaluable for me to a) figure out that I didn't want to go into politics but b) come across the degree of politics, philosophy and economics for the first time, which I ended up studying three years later.

Such work experience was the norm for schools in England in the 1990s and 2000s. Through the 2010s fewer schools offered the support, but Covid was the real clincher. Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of schools in which the majority of students did some kind of work experience fell by a third. My brother's school didn't organise any careers fairs or encourage any work experience for the cohort locked down in their bedrooms.

At the time, much ink was spilt across the think tanks of Westminster about the "Covid generation". They warned about young people's mental health, about their educational outcomes, about their unpreparedness for the world of work. All the effects that they warned about then have come to fruition today. And it's even worse, because economic stagnation and the advent of AI have cut down even more opportunities.

But few grown-ups, it seems, want to explicitly make the link to Covid. Instead, we sneer at the fragility of Gen Z, their weird puritan habits, and retort, "In my day..." to the youngsters who complain about how hard it is to find a job. But the stuff we took for granted in our day was denied to this cohort, in the name of saving older generations from disease. Now they're finding their way in the world. Let's cut them some slack.

Sathnam Sanghera Notebook

What's with this finger lickin' food obsession?

The other day I spoke at a school, as I regularly do, and, at the end, braced myself for a bunch of wild questions. This is how it goes with kids: you speak for an hour about history, about journalism, and then face a barrage of entirely unrelated queries about your preferred football team, your salary, what car you drive.

Though this time, the interrogation was even more bizarre than usual: for almost every query related to the eight hours I once spent working at KFC for an article on the brand. The students had seen the photograph that illustrated the piece, it drowned out any interest they might have had in anything else and it confirmed what I have feared for a while: chicken is now our culture.

It is everywhere. Politicians are asked about their "cheeky" Nando's orders. Chicken Shop Date and Hot Ones are two of the biggest things on social media. Chicken shops have colonised most high streets. And Mo Gilligan has just made a Netflix documentary about Britain's £12 million-a-day fried chicken industry. When I was growing up, we would fetishise McDonald's and the occasional pizza. But we didn't make it our entire purpose in life. What the hell are they putting in those battery chickens?

Imax-ed out

I watched *The Odyssey* at an Imax because everyone kept telling me that is how Christopher Nolan planned for it to be seen, and the experience was terrible. Everyone is doing the same, which means the queues for popcorn are longer than those for Boxing Day sales at Next and staff barely have time to clean between packed end-to-end screenings. The sound is too loud: about 20 per cent of the dialogue was inaudible. And unless you are in a strip of seats down the middle of the room, it's like watching a film on your neighbour's TV through your living room window.

In seat E63 I didn't have the intended immersive experience, I had the experience of watching people in better seats have an immersive experience. Though it's a sign of how good the film is that I still liked it. I'd just like to watch it again on a regular screen, and see more of Matt Damon than his knees.

Respect to Fleet

There isn't much to be inspired by in British politics at the moment, but respect to Natalie Fleet, who stepped down recently as safeguarding minister after finding the role "overwhelmingly triggering", telling the BBC that it was making her ill. The Labour MP, who was groomed and raped as a teenager, told the new prime minister that she "sadly couldn't stay" in the post.

How refreshing to hear someone admit they can't do a job, for entirely understandable human reasons. It reminded me of Estelle Morris, who resigned as education secretary in 2002 because she admitted she could not cope with running a massive government department. And it made me recall the experience of once taking a trustee role at a charity for people with severe mental illness. With two people in my family suffering from such conditions, I found the issues we dealt with too close to home and didn't extend my tenure.

It left me with lifelong respect for people who take the worst thing that has happened to them and work to help others in a similar situation. And with deep appreciation for anyone, like Fleet, who tries but is frank about not being ready. I hope her rare honesty means she is given another chance elsewhere soon.

Motorway madness

In yet another case of outrageous southern bias, in a survey Kent's M20 was named England's best major road, and the M27 in Hampshire the worst.

Sure, the M27 has seen long-running work, but have you been on the M1 recently? It is a nightmare of "smart" features that don't work, inexplicable roadworks, congestion, erratic speed cameras and people who cannot see or drive straight. Conversely, the M40 was rated some way below the M20, when it has everything you could want in a major road: no speed cameras for long stretches, a physical hard shoulder, a branch of Pizza Express in one of its service stations and the glory of the West Midlands at the end of it.

THUNDERER

Competitions are best way to boost British start-ups

Tris Dyson

The prime minister wants pension funds to invest £1 billion in British start-ups. As has been pointed out, it's not the job of pension funds to support the government's growth agenda — their duty is to member outcomes. That doesn't preclude investing in British start-ups but it must be based on the potential returns, not geography.

Thanks to smaller pools of available venture capital, UK innovators face big challenges securing funding compared with US and Chinese competitors. In 2024, UK start-up funding dropped to £16.2 billion, while US counterparts raised more than £65 billion. The UK's lower risk appetite spreads capital across many smaller bets. It's rare to see big, radical investments and innovators can spend more time chasing funding than scaling breakthroughs.

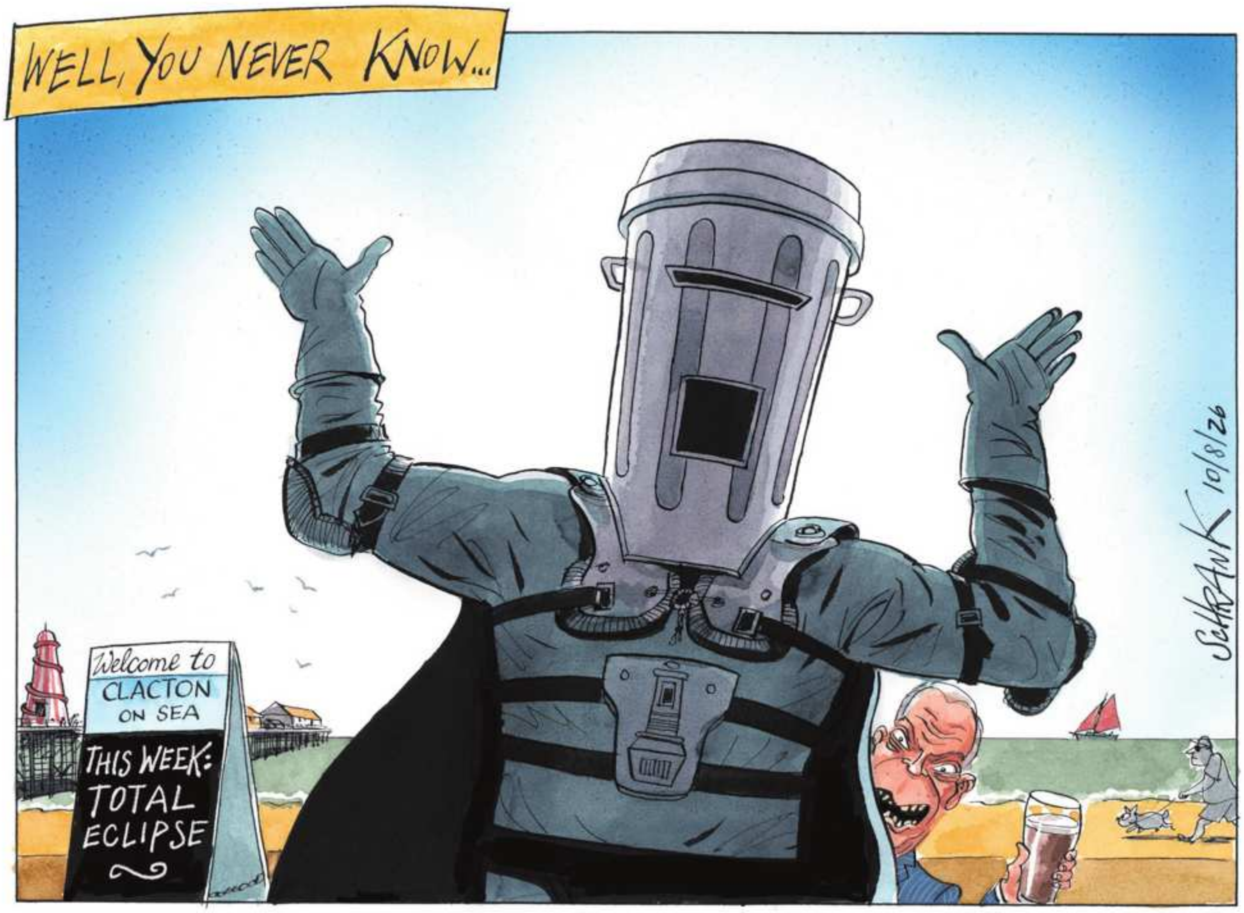
Andy Burnham's £1 billion fund aims to shift this, emulating the type of pension investments seen in Australia. It seems to me unlikely that UK pension funds will suddenly discover a greater risk appetite than venture capital firms. So how can this work? We need to identify winners. A series of UK-helmed Longitude Prizes built around national industrial and social priorities should become the mechanism for identifying and advancing a multitude of UK start-ups (and their technologies) first.

Unlike R&D grants, which fund a promise of innovation, challenge prizes incentivise innovators to solve a problem with staged seed funding, business support and a large cash reward for the best solution once it is proven to work. This means multiple approaches to the same problem are judged, progressed and developed, turning concepts and ideas into successful enterprises.

Competitors in the Open Up challenges established a market for open banking technologies in the UK, with many of the contenders and winners, from Fluidly to Moneybox, cementing London as the world's leading fintech hub. The runner-up in the Dynamic Demand Challenge grew from an idea to manage the intermittency of renewables to become Kraken Technologies — the tech that sits behind Octopus's smart EV charging infrastructure — which was spun off this year and valued at £6 billion.

Start-ups need investment but pension funds need assurance that they are picking winners. A new generation of Longitude Prizes, incentivising advances in everything from advanced materials and energy security to neurodegenerative diseases, can create that pipeline. Identifying stress-tested, high-potential British businesses de-risks the choice for pension funds so they can continue to prioritise member outcomes.

Tris Dyson is founder and executive director of Challenge Works



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20mph speed limits play havoc with the mind

More than two million people took speed awareness courses in Britain last year — very few of them were boy racers

Libby Purves

@LIB_THINKS

There is a low, dark humour in collecting excuses for speeding offences. They vary from "nagging wife" or urgent lavatory visit to the motorcyclist in winter leathers who "needed wind to cool him" and a woman who told police her windswept hairdo made her "look fast", even when she wasn't. Even better when it's a famous name in court: actors heading for shoots, a TV chef taking a cat to the vet, assorted arrogant footballers.

But the newest self-exculpator is Lynda La Plante, the creator of *Prime Suspect*. She'll win public sympathy, not just because she's 83 and drives her dog to the park but, as she excitedly told the court, she needs to meet criminals for her research as they like to be "very choosy of the location". The real surge of empathy will be because what she repeatedly broke was a 20mph limit with "confusing" signs to indicate a drop from 30 to 20mph, a speed camera only 10 seconds beyond the 20mph sign, and "cyclists overtaking and almost hitting the bumper". There's bitter irony both in a cyclist shooting past in a reckless exemption and the artful closeness of the camera to the sign.

The surge in such 20mph limits, which now cover half of London, with plans for many more, is not only the capital's project. In the past six months 1,000 miles of British roads were restricted to 20mph, notably in Glasgow, Cornwall and Solihull. In Wales it's a default in urban areas. The result is a huge rise in offences and fines. And, since insurance companies wanting to know about licence points don't differentiate between an 85mph hooligan in a Jag and an anxious cat lady hitting 24 in a tangle of bikes and bus lanes, there's an equally dizzy rise in speed-awareness courses.

Cabbies complain that London is now the world's slowest capital

Last year, 2.23 million people paid for a three-hour solemn seminar — online or in person. As the limit spreads there'll be more. Some for the usual reasons of haste, frustration or inattention, but since many of us still drive a manual car, a few offences will occur because 20mph happens to sit at an awkward gap between second and third gear. If you drop to 15mph, people hoot at you.

Cards on the table, I heartily approve of speed-awareness courses. Launched in 2003, they have had real influence on casualty levels. I confess to attending three, at very long intervals: never for anything more thrilling than 36mph, honest. They are interesting, engaging, civilly non-judgmental and, if you're lucky enough to get an in-person one, a great way to make acquaintances. It's not quite what the rom-com industry calls a "meet cute" but there have been actual marriages.

You learn statistics, re-learn arcana about dual-carriageway barriers, discuss videos of troublesome junctions. Occasionally, from the restless demeanour of Mr Angry or Ms Resentful at your table, you also get the useful reminder that some fellow-drivers are incurably dodgy. It makes you forever more watchful at corners.

I am also a willing-enough citizen regarding 20mph, and actually stand the odd chill or sweltering hour taking part in community speedwatch because our end-of-the-line village really needs it. But authorities need calm, serious judgment over speed limits, as with any authoritarian law. In London, the mayor Sir Sadiq Khan's passion for extending the low limit makes professional drivers (notably cabbies) complain that it's the world's slowest capital city, with roads clogged day and night even at its quietest.

Sometimes, as La Plante points out, the change is sudden and easy to ignore amid the forest of street furniture. A favourite argument from the solicitor known as "Mr Loophole" is that drivers' concentration should be less on the speedometer than on complex road systems, buses, pedestrians and cyclists who shoot lights with impunity and injure others with their reckless actions.

Any restriction on citizens needs balance and careful moderation

Meanwhile, there is a vocal campaign every summer to impose 20mph limits on small country roads: after all, while less than a fifth of the population are rural, two thirds of fatalities are. Cyclists would certainly find life less terrifying but it would massively raise online delivery times and costs, and immensely hamper tradesmen. Here, Sizewell C and solar farm roadworks made speeding offences shoot up by a third.

Of course safety matters; road deaths are tragic. But any restriction on citizens needs careful balance and moderation. People need to get about. And, equally importantly, there are wider matters of psychology, ethics and social cohesion because people also need to be presumed, and required, to make responsible decisions. Modern cars are designed to coddle and reassure, bleep and warn, make their own decisions about headlights and distances, squeak anxiously if you change lane for a safe and necessary reason. The most educational part of speed-awareness courses is showing photographs of roads ahead and making attendees say aloud what they see, and what might happen. That's constructive.

What is not constructive is when (as one tutor admitted) a local restriction is patently nuts, maybe connected more to a parish boundary than any habitation. In Suffolk, sometimes you come off a straight, pointless 30mph into 50mph just as the road starts to twist more dangerously. Why? Elsewhere there's a mystery 20mph sign and a 30mph five paces apart: it's been like that for 15 years. Then turn into a single-track lane and find the black diagonal of total de-restriction.

You know it would be nuts to attempt even 50mph, let alone 60mph, but also that someone else probably will. Because the sign was there, dammit, and they've just done miles of empty open road at 30mph for utterly unfathomable reasons.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to
letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to
1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

NHS and social care

Sir, The debate on social care (letters, Aug 6-8) has focused almost entirely on how it supports the NHS. The equally important question is how the NHS supports social care. Andy Burnham is right to highlight the unfairness of England's social care system, but the injustice extends beyond who pays for care.

As an NHS nurse working in both community and acute settings, I have seen nursing home residents lose access to NHS community services such as specialist nursing and tissue viability. These services would often be available if the same patients remained in their own homes, not because of clinical need but because of outdated commissioning arrangements. Much attention is given to hospital beds occupied by patients awaiting social care, illustrating the NHS's reliance on social care. Yet social care is equally dependent on NHS expertise. Denying nursing home residents equitable access to NHS community services increases pressure on care providers and contributes to avoidable hospital admissions.

Tina Charlton RGN, RSCN, DN
Ret'd deputy chief nurse,
Buckinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Trust; Tring, Herts

Burnham's tour

Sir, I hope that on his journey around Britain, Andy Burnham will visit Devon and specifically Ilfracombe, which has the lowest healthy life expectancy of any rural town in the country. Central Ilfracombe ranks as one of Devon's most economically deprived neighbourhoods, with roughly 30 per cent of town centre residents facing income hardship. Nearly four in ten children grow up in poverty. I also hope he will look at his devolution proposal and ponder how this could possibly help Ilfracombe.

Nicola Daniel
Budleigh Salterton, Devon

Perpendicular pint

Sir, In your leading article "Pleasures of Drinking" (Aug 7), Westminster council's proposal to ban "vertical drinking" is referred to as a "curious neologism". It may be curious, but it is hardly a neologism, considering that "perpendicular drinking" was quoted 125 years ago by B Seebohm Rowntree as being common in public houses serving the poor in York. Personally, I prefer the resonance of gothic church architecture in the older formulation — foolish or otherwise.

Professor Laura Vaughan
Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

Corrections and clarifications

The Times **takes complaints about editorial content seriously. We are committed to abiding by the Independent Press Standards Organisation rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice that IPSO enforces. Requests for corrections should be sent to feedback@thetimes.co.uk**

Badenoch's block on Shapps's candidacy

Sir, Paul Goodman makes clear in his superb overview how crucial to understanding the Conservative leader's mindset is her extraordinary decision to bar Sir Grant Shapps from party candidacy ("Shapps ban bodes ill for Badenoch's Tories", Aug 8). As a floating voter I found Shapps an encouraging presence during his adept, energetic and polished performance in his various ministerial roles. Some of these roles were forced on him at short notice but he dealt with them with aplomb. The bar he now faces seems odd in that Kemi Badenoch wants "new brooms" but has not spoken to Shapps, appearing to assume that he is the same person who served in previous Tory governments, that his political positions are past positions and that his application to stand cannot be motivated by new beliefs and convictions that might serve the country well.

Goodman spells out with exemplary cogency the folly that attends mere newness — "new MPs ... with little knowledge of Westminster or Whitehall ... no memory of mistakes". It might be worth Badenoch's time to at least talk to Shapps.

Peter Wood
Stainton, Cumbria

Sir, It is hard not to agree with Paul Goodman when he suggests that the Commons would benefit from more MPs with experience. Indeed, Lord Lisvane made exactly this point (letter, Aug 5). In that context surely there must be a way in which Sir Grant Shapps could show "true contrition" for his leadership and membership of the old Conservative Party, in a manner similar to the former neo-Nazi recently appointed as the party's anti-extremism adviser. The best way might be to follow the Chinese Communist Party approach and to appear in front of a public star chamber and recite at length that he rejects Boris, Liz, Theresa, David and all their works. I exclude Rishi, on the basis he is still a Tory party MP so is presumably acceptable.

Johnny Cameron
Pewsey, Wilts

Sir, As an activist who assisted Grant Shapps for 24 years as a candidate and MP in the Welwyn Hatfield constituency, I think he was one of the finest campaigners in parliament. In refusing his candidacy, Kemi Badenoch has lost Shapps's services and the proven expertise he brought to the party. Experience seems to count against an applicant. The former Tory MP Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg has similarly been reported to have applied to be a Conservative candidate at the next election. He had a not dissimilar career trajectory to Shapps time-wise, so it will be interesting to see if his application is also rejected.

Michael Leach
Letchworth Garden City, Herts

Sir, Peter Phillips (letter, Aug 8) suggests that in allowing Joshua Bonehill-Paine to be an extremism adviser to the Conservative Party, Kemi Badenoch "has most probably lost the Jewish vote". Well she hasn't lost mine. Proportionately he has been deradicalised for a third of his life. How long is long enough? Who better than a former poacher to become a gamekeeper? Ms Badenoch could have taken the easy way out by refusing to let Bonehill-Paine become a local authority candidate. Instead she did what was right, knowing the flak that would follow. And by even refusing to meet Bonehill-Paine, the (mostly Labour-supporting) Jewish leadership haven't exactly covered themselves in glory.

Jonathan Hoffman
Southend, Essex

Wealth creation

Sir, James Kanagasooriam was right to argue that Britain must support wealth creation (Aug 5; letters, Aug 6). But his analysis underestimates how present levels of wealth inequality undermine public confidence in that goal. Fourteen million people have less than £100 in savings, while a small number accumulate levels of wealth that confer outsized advantage. This widening gap between those who can build security and those who struggle to meet basic needs makes the promise of wealth creation feel distant from the lives of many people. In that context, asking those same people simply to believe in wealth creation is unlikely to succeed.

Research by the Fairness Foundation this year found that the public remained supportive of genuine wealth creation. When presented with different examples, 64 per cent viewed genuine innovation and entrepreneurship favourably, compared with just 28 per cent who said the same of private equity. Hence there is a clear mandate for government to support wealth creation, but that must be accompanied by a serious effort to widen access to wealth for everyone. That means reforming our broken tax system, tackling extractive industries, and driving good growth that benefits all communities.

Jason Bunting
Head of politics, Fairness Foundation

Justice denied?

Sir, Although I have immense sympathy for the family of PC Andrew Harper, I also feel deep unease that senior police officers should appear to back the campaign to treat two of his killers differently from other criminals found guilty of manslaughter. Stuart Blaik, the investigating officer, says he is "appalled". Jason Hogg, chief constable of Thames Valley, states that confidence in the criminal justice system is at stake, and that "public opinion is overwhelming" ("Chief constable joins clamour to halt early release", Aug 6).

Surely confidence in the justice system is put at greater risk when senior officers think it fair that criminals whose cases have made the headlines should be treated more harshly than those whose cases have not. Is the next step for "public opinion" to carry more weight than that of the CPS, which chose the charge of manslaughter rather than murder, the jury that heard the case, the judge who decided the sentence, or the MPs who approved the new law? If we are to become a society that wants public opinion to decide the fate of criminals in shocking cases, I fear we should prepare to bring back the gallows.

John Young
Brighton

20mph takeover

Sir, Your article "How 20mph is taking over towns" (Aug 8) omits one simple fact: profiteering by car insurance companies. They often use these penalties as an excuse to jack up car insurance premiums. My car insurance increased by £1,419 because I was caught by a speed camera doing 24mph in a 20mph zone. My accident history shows that I have not cost an insurance company one penny in more than 50 years. This is a ruthless exploitation of elderly, careful drivers.

Max Winberg
Gerrards Cross, Bucks

BIG CHANGES IN SPANISH THOUGHT

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 10, 1926

From Spanish Number, a special edition of The Times

This Special Number is a testimony to the secular interest which the British people feel in the Spanish people, and an attempt to inform and extend that feeling by articles from writers of both nationalities upon the chief aspects of the Spanish life of to-day. But descriptions, however truthful and vivid, cannot convey to men and women of one race and history more than a vague and imperfect conception of the mind and the habits of another. To lend precision and fullness to this conception personal intercourse is necessary, and it is hoped that these pictures of Spain and of Spanish manners from the Pyrenees to the Straits, and from Corunna to Barcelona, will stimulate the growing desire of Englishmen to visit one of the most renowned and most delightful lands upon the earth.

The message with which the Marquis de Estella honours us for publication in this Number will be the first feature to attract the attention of many readers by reason of the rare qualities he has shown as a leader of men, and of the unique position to which he has attained. This Number will have missed its object if it does not bring home to thousands of our countrymen the great change which Spanish thought is undergoing and the manifold possibilities it brings. Years must pass before they can be fully developed or entirely foreseen; but a glance at these columns shows something of what has been done and something of what may be done with wisdom and with perseverance.

Our special articles cover a very wide range of interests. The financial and material situation of the country, its rich and diversified natural resources; its wealth in many minerals; the present development of agriculture and of mining, of industry, manufacture, commerce, markets and international trade; and the prospects for judicious investment which Spanish undertakings afford are among the material factors and problems examined and discussed with knowledge and intelligence. The general impression made by these studies is wonder and pleasure at the extent and the intensity of the movement which is permeating the moral and material life of Spain.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Unease over college

Sir, I agreed with most of Francis Bown's letter (Aug 7) about his increasing concern for Jesus College, Cambridge, save that I believe it was correct to return the Benin Bronze, given its past association with slavery. However, this caused me to ask Sonita Alleyne, the master of Jesus College, why, if it was right to return the Benin Bronze, she felt it acceptable for Jesus College to receive money from the Chinese government, which has detained more than one million Uighurs. I sent her proof of China's enslavement of the Uighurs by attaching articles from national newspapers. After much chivvying I received a long reply full of platitudes, which completely failed to answer the question. I wrote again asking her to explain simply her contradictory approach to slavery. I received no further reply. A few months later I read in the media that Jesus College had stopped receiving money from China for its China Centre. Mr Bown is right to be concerned; I have already changed my will.

Peter Higgins
Steeple Aston, Oxon

Dogs in the dock

Sir, How I laughed at Deborah Ross's piece ("Good for you? My dog put years on me", Aug 8). I agreed with everything she said, but there is a saying: "There is no such thing as a bad dog, only an untrained owner." All new owners should go on a course before having a dog. My first labrador was adorable but totally naughty. She ate everything she could find, including birthday party food for a friend's child, all bird food in neighbours' gardens and every Easter egg my children ever received. Over the years I have learnt to train them better. The joy a dog gives surpasses all the faults and the end is awful (read Kipling's *The Power of the Dog*). But I don't think I could live without one: the loyalty, companionship and sheer joy when one walks in the door make up for any misdemeanours.

Meg Atkins
Hungerford, Berks

HMP Chequers

Sir, Further to Greg Jones's letter (Aug 8) suggesting Chequers, Chevening and Dorneywood etc be sold, why not simply turn them into prisons? The security that exists to prevent unauthorised access could be repurposed to prevent unauthorised egress.

Malcolm Bermange
Radlett, Herts

Irksome jargon

Sir, In Ann Treneman's quest for ghastly phrases (Aug 8), she found one she liked: "from the get-go". I received a letter from O2 starting: "Hello Anne, We wanted to give you a heads up about a change we are making..."

It was about an increase in charges. I suppose the use of this phrase was meant to soften the blow, but it just made me cross that I should receive an official letter containing jargon.

Anne Steward
Peterborough

Thrilling movie

Sir, After *Last Tango in Powys* (letter, Aug 8), perhaps we could head south for *Dial M for Merthyr*?

Charlie Rapple
Oxford

Daily Universal Register

European Athletics Championships begin at Alexander Stadium, Birmingham.

Nature notes

Mugwort is a common wild plant of verges, hedgerows and waste ground. It can reach 1.5m tall and has strongly aromatic, deeply divided leaves with a pale fur on their undersides, which can be collected and used to light fires. For centuries it's been used in traditional medicine and to flavour beer wherever it grows, from north Africa to Ukraine, where it gave its name to the city of Chernobyl. A tea made from its leaves is thought by some to promote lucid dreaming; a similar effect can supposedly be obtained from stuffing a pillow with dried mugwort and inhaling its fragrance. In the UK it rarely spreads by seeds, new plants instead springing up from sections of its rhizomatous roots. MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today

Tony Ross, *pictured*, illustrator, Pippi Longstocking, Horrid Henry, 88; **Haifaa al-Mansour**, film director, *Mary Shelley* (2017), the first female Saudi Arabian film-maker, 52; **Ian Anderson**, rock musician, Jethro Tull, 79; **Antonio Banderas**, actor, *The Mask of Zorro* (1998), 66; **Nicolas Berggruen**, investor, founder of the Berggruen Institute (think tank), 65; **Riddick Bowe**, boxer, undisputed world heavyweight champion (1992), 59; **Baroness (Elizabeth) Butler-Sloss**, lord justice of appeal (1988-99, the court's first female member), president of the family division (1999-2005), 93; **Suzanne Collins**, author, *The Hunger Games* trilogy, 64; **Robert Crampton**, columnist, The Times, and author, *How to Be a Beta Male* (2017), 62; **Andy Cresswell-Davis**, musician, Stackridge, the opening band at the first Glastonbury festival (1970), 77; **Lawrence Dallaglio**, rugby union player, England (1995-2007), 54; **Edward Guinness, Earl of Iveagh**, chairman, Elveden Farms, 57; **Roy Keane**, footballer, Manchester United (1993-2005), and manager, 55; **Susan Lewis**, novelist and memoirist, *Don't Believe A Word* (2025), 70; **Anita Lonsbrough**, swimmer, Olympic gold medallist (1960), UK's first female flag bearer at a summer Olympics opening ceremony (Tokyo 1964), 85; **Shaun Murphy**, snooker player, world champion (2005), 44; **Ian Murray**, Labour MP for Edinburgh South, creative industries, media and arts minister, 50; **Sir Michael Pepper**, physicist, Pender professor of nanoelectronics, University College London, 84; **Chris Read**, cricketer, England (1999-2007) and Nottinghamshire CCC (1998-2017), 48; **Juan Manuel Santos**, Nobel peace prize (2016), president of Colombia (2010-18), 75; **John Spencer**, rugby union player, England (1969-71), president, Rugby Football Union (2017-18), 79; **Justin Theroux**, actor, *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (2026), and screenwriter, *Zoolander 2* (2016), 55; **Baroness (Rosie) Winterton of Doncaster**, Labour MP for Doncaster Central (1997-2024), deputy speaker (2020-24), 68; **Lord (Clifton) Wrottesley**, chairman, Ice Hockey UK, former Olympian (skeleton), 58.

On this day

In **2014** Recep Tayyip Erdogan was voted in as Turkey's first directly elected president.

The last word

"Don't hold your parents up to contempt. After all, you are their son, and it is just possible that you may take after them." Evelyn Waugh, writer, in The Tablet (May 5, 1951)

Net Positive

Andy Burnham has brought a welcome dose of pragmatism to Labour's unrealistic net zero plans. Energy bills must now be stabilised in an affordable manner

The inflexible pursuit of Labour's net zero targets never made economic sense. In Ed Miliband, the net zero agenda had a champion as immovable as he was doctrinaire. There was every fear that Miatta Fahnbulleh, the rising Labour star who has now stepped into the brief, would be another energy secretary in Mr Miliband's mould. She once served as his senior economic adviser and, as director of the left-wing New Economics Foundation think tank, recommended that Britain should accelerate its journey towards net zero, paid for by wealth taxes.

Ms Fahnbulleh's first weeks as energy secretary have instead introduced a welcome note of pragmatism. In an interview with this paper, she revealed her intention to relax meaningfully the government's most troublesome environmental target. Under Mr Miliband's clean power pledge, the UK would have had to eliminate virtually all fossil fuels from its power supplies by 2030, regardless of the pressure that would exert on household energy bills. That rigid target appears likely to be delayed by at least one or two years. That is sensible: overseeing an effective transition in Britain's energy mix requires keeping public sentiment on side. That in turn means household bills must be kept manageable: a concern that Mr Miliband's strategy appeared to give little heed.

Another pledge that looks destined to be moderated is Labour's mandate on electric vehicles. Mr Miliband's zero-emission vehicle mandate required that by 2030 only 20 per cent of cars were to have engines running on diesel or petrol. Hybrid cars were to be allowed only until 2035. It never made sense to pursue that goal while disregarding the reality of market forces. Demand for electric vehicles has simply not matured with the rapidity Mr Miliband's plans required — understandably, given the slow emergence of EV infrastructure. Last month, only 27.5 per cent of new car sales were battery electric vehicles. The Department for Transport is now rightly consulting on how to make its target more feasible: perhaps permitting half of cars to run on fuel come 2030.

Nothing about this more measured approach is indicative of failure. Britain has a climate legacy to be proud of. To date, the UK has decarbonised much more quickly than many of its peers. In 2004, renewables made up only 4 per cent of Britain's energy mix; by 2024 they were more than half. The Labour government has hopefully realised that enforcing inflexible climate-related deadlines can do more harm than good. It would be more honest, and ultimately smarter politics, to level with the British public about the compromises they face. It is for the sake of energy security that Ms Fahnbulleh should allow drilling for oil to proceed in the North Sea in the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields. It would boost domestic production, obviating the risk of physical shortages during wars or other moments of disruption. It is a sensible hedge against geopolitical uncertainty.

Similar considerations support easing the dogmatic pursuit of net zero. Racing ahead to 2030 clean energy targets risks effectively pegging domestic energy prices to the costs of offshore wind power — more expensive per unit than alternatives, such as solar and onshore wind. There is little evidence that Britain's shaky grid is up to accommodating the reorientation towards renewables, either. Whistleblowers at the UK's National Energy System Operator revealed that in June the UK came close to widespread blackouts on three occasions. Similar blackouts occurred last year in Spain and Portugal: the result, it seems, of systems that had been too rapidly reorientated to solar energy.

Making the transition to net zero as manageable and affordable as possible is not a retreat from a net zero future, but simply a realistic way of getting there.

A Tax Too Far

New levies on banks would damage economic growth and the UK's standing

When Andy Burnham talks of overthrowing four decades of economic consensus, there are several enemies on his mind. One is Margaret Thatcher, the predecessor who dominates his thoughts like no other. Another is what Mr Burnham lambasts as "neoliberal" economics, in other words the reforms that transformed the UK's reliance on declining manufacturing to financial services. In the urgent search for new sources of revenue, it is possible that banks may be Mr Burnham's target in the budget to be delivered on October 28.

Such is the level of concern that notable figures are already warning about what may lie ahead. One is Dame Jane Fraser, chief executive of Citigroup. She has expressed fears about a new bank tax in the UK, warning that "money votes with its feet". Dame Jane, who is Scottish and boss of the third-largest bank in the United States, has said there remains "a desire and want for the UK to succeed". Yet business leaders are right to argue that further taxes will make this ambition harder.

On a recent visit to London, Dame Jane pointed out that the tax rate for banks in the City was higher than for all its major competitors: 48 per cent here, compared with 27 per cent in New York and 28 to 29 per cent in Dublin. Introducing some form of windfall tax on bank profits — an idea Mr Burnham has been urged to consider by backbench Labour MPs — would deter investment, reduce profits and ultimately make borrowing for ordinary customers more difficult.

This sentiment was echoed by Jamie Dimon, the JP Morgan chief executive, who said there would be "adverse consequences" if the prime minister pursued banks for more tax. Like Citi, JP Morgan is constructing a significant new office in the UK: in its case, a £3 billion tower in Canary Wharf for about half its 23,000-strong workforce here. Mr Dimon warned the previous chancellor, Rachel Reeves, that the project would not go ahead if she targeted banks in her last budget. She rightly heeded his warning and Mr Burnham should too.

The Burnham government may be in its early days, but it must realise the UK does not operate in a silo. Speaking in populist terms about clamping down on profligate capitalism will garner applause from the Labour faithful, but it does not work in the real world. Major employers like Citi and JP Morgan will simply move their focus elsewhere, to ready-made alternatives in Europe, if the UK becomes less desirable for investment.

Since taking office, Mr Burnham has shown little sign that he appreciates the importance of profit and a well-functioning market economy. Financial services are one of the UK's bona fide success stories. Last year this sector and related services were responsible for 11 per cent of all economic output, equivalent to £290 billion. According to TheCityUK, a lobby group, they were responsible for employing 2.5 million people with two thirds of those jobs outside London.

The UK has great strengths to build on, thanks to its geographic location, breadth of skills and internationally respected legal system. But that is offset by its aggressive tax base. There is an example of what will happen if Mr Burnham pursues banks. Last month BP announced it would put its North Sea oil assets up for sale because tax policies had made them uneconomic. Taxing golden eggs will ensure they do not remain golden eggs for very much longer.

Basement Tracks

One of the Jam's biggest hits is not the only song to be written in a curious place

With its slicing open chords, the Jam's *Going Underground* is instantly recognisable as one of the 1980s' most potent protest songs. Paul Weller's hit was spat out in the same manner it was written: by an angry 21-year-old stumbling out of a pub and back to his basement flat. The song was written in a dank coal store beneath a Georgian terrace flat in London's upmarket Pimlico district. Mr Weller was less influenced by his millionaire neighbours — whose ranks he would one day join — than the crime-ridden housing estates nearby.

Going Underground is far from the only pop hit to be written in an unlikely location. In fact, pop history suggests that the odder — or more mundane — the place, the more artistic inspiration will strike. *Homeward Bound* by Simon and Garfunkel was penned at draughty Widnes station in Cheshire while 23-year-old Paul Simon was waiting to catch the early morning "milk train" to Hull. The spot is now commemorated by a plaque.

Arriving in Hull a few years later — purely because his drummer told him he could get his car serviced cheaply — David Bowie was put up in a council flat on Brisbane Street. While in town he met the guitarist Mick Ronson, the Spiders from Mars were formed and the early arrangements were laid down for tracks that would usher in glam rock and turn Bowie into a superstar — all to a backdrop of a windswept northern sea port.

Queen, too, found inspiration in mundane locations for stadium-filling rock. Freddie Mercury was in the bath in Munich's Bayerischer Hof Hotel when he wrote *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*. Brian May, meanwhile, composed most of his 1991 solo hit *Driven by You* while sitting on the lavatory in a Los Angeles hotel. Such an image makes Mr Weller's coal hole sound almost appealing. Perhaps there are some elements of the creative process that are best kept in obscurity underground.

World

Iranians wrestle with trauma of a relentless war

Iran

Roxana Saberi, Fatemeh Jamalpour

The hope that Iran's regime would fall sustained Yasmin for months, even after security forces beat her so badly during the January protests in Tehran that she was unable to work for weeks.

But with the Islamic Republic still intact through the whiplash of war and truce with the United States, the 44-year-old feels emotionally exhausted and torn.

"In practice, a war that isn't meant to change the regime only brings harm to ordinary people," she said. "On the other hand, I also hate the idea of an agreement with the people who have killed their own citizens and turned the lives of 90 million people into misery. The thought of the Islamic Republic remaining in power genuinely makes me feel depressed and deeply sad."

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said yesterday it would not reopen the Strait of Hormuz until the US met Tehran's conditions, including compensation for war damages.

Abbas Araghchi, the foreign minister denied that the Iranians were negotiating with the US, saying they were merely "exchanging messages" via intermediaries.

President Trump said later that the US was "semi-negotiating" with Iran. "We are low keying it," he told Axios.

For Yasmin, the drawn-out negotiations are just the latest ordeal after Israel's war with Iran in June last year, the regime's brutal crackdown on the January uprising that left thousands dead, two regime-imposed internet blackouts, a surge in executions and a collapsing economy. The upheaval has led to widespread trauma and what one psychotherapist described as "unresolved collective grief", according to interviews with mental health clinicians and their clients, healthcare providers and other Iranians.

The trauma spans generations and classes, clinicians said. Relatives of political prisoners live in fear their loved ones could be executed at any moment. At least 26 people were hanged between January and July in relation to the protests, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, which is based in Washington, said.

Many Iranians told The Times that they felt abandoned, believing that the world had largely stood by during the January massacre and subsequent executions.

President Trump, Europe and "all those who claim to defend human rights closed their eyes to Iran and shut up", said Jila, a psychotherapist in Tehran in her thirties. Last month she witnessed the public hanging of two young men in connection to the January protests, in the central Iranian city of Isfahan. "I couldn't sleep," she said. "I was so confused and angry."

Daily life goes on despite US strikes and a worsening economic backdrop

Jila, who like others interviewed inside Iran spoke on condition of using a pseudonym, said she was trying to help her clients endure the pain of recent events while struggling with her memories of the regime's brutality. She said she had lost her zest for dancing and singing, but she felt more hopeful after the US resumed its strikes last month, a few weeks after the "memorandum of understanding" was announced.

"I'm glad Trump realised the Islamic Republic isn't capable of genuine negotiations," she said. "I hope the war continues and ultimately leads to the destruction of the Islamic Republic. For my part, I'm willing to pay the price — for freedom."

Many other Iranians, however, said the renewed clashes only intensified the suffering. Alongside civilian casualties, infrastructure has been destroyed and the economy has declined further.

A 32-year-old psychotherapy patient in Tehran said she hoped negotiations would ultimately make the threat of another war "disappear completely".

Noshene Ranjbar, an Iranian-American psychiatrist based in Arizona who works with a network of mental health professionals counselling clients in Iran, said the divide between those who supported the renewed strikes and those who opposed them was causing infighting, even within families.

"Iranians end up fighting each other because their trauma is activated," she said. "They can't fight the IRGC, or Israel and the US, so they unconsciously take their anger, disappointment and fear out on one another."

Many Iranians, like Yasmin, also described a feeling of "survival mode". She said: "I have so many small and big worries that I honestly can't even focus on the war. The biggest problem is the feeling of financial instability."

Parvaneh, a psychotherapist in Shiraz, southwestern Iran, said uncertainty about the future and economic pressures had become part of the daily reality of life for many people — but the January crackdown had left the deepest wounds. "These deaths have not been processed — not even mourned," she said in voice memos she deleted soon after, fearing regime reprisals.

Azadeh Afsahi, the founder of Iran House, a Los Angeles-based organisation supporting the survivors of torture and former political prisoners, said: "What the Iranian people are dealing with is nothing that was ever taught in books on healing. The trauma of being raped [in prison], having a family member executed [...] how are you able to survive?"

Iran House has been counselling Arman, a 32-year-old LGBT technology worker in Karaj, a city west of Tehran, who has been struggling to sleep. "I wish the voice of the Iranian people would be heard and that this vile regime had not made life so hard for us," he said. Iranians were "in financial crisis and psychological collapse", he added.

Parvaneh, the psychotherapist in Shiraz, said Iran had free crisis hotlines and intervention centres, but many people feared such platforms could be monitored. Private psychotherapy, not covered by insurance, has become unaffordable for many.

Hamid Yaghoubi, head of the Iranian Scientific Association for Suicide Prevention, warned in May that depression and suicide could peak in the following months.

Farzaneh, a nurse in Tehran, said she had already seen a sharp rise in suicides among people under 25, many under severe financial strain.

Even those able to seek treatment have found that antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs and antipsychotics have become scarce or unaffordable.

In a letter obtained by The Times, dated May 24, Dr Seyed Vahid Shariat, president of the Iranian Psychiatric Association, said price rises for vital psychiatric drugs had created "serious concerns regarding patients' access to essential treatments". An Iranian ministry of health official said that the shortages were partly due to delays in foreign currency allocations and disrupted supply routes.

Several psychotherapists said they were also taking steps to manage their own distress. Jila said she hit her lowest point when the authorities cut off the internet and she contemplated suicide. But when Iranian friends outside the country checked on her, she realised she mattered.

Jila said she was also driven by her desire to "take revenge" on the regime. To keep going, she repeats a line from Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: "Don't let the bastards grind you down."

Paris takes the plunge after Seine clean-up

From our correspondent

DAVID CHAZAN
PARIS

Thousands of Parisians thronged the Left Bank at the weekend to watch divers somersault from a 20m platform in front of the Eiffel Tower.

The first international high-diving contest in the Seine was a spectacular test of the city's €1.4 billion river clean-up, but it also exposed its continuing vulnerability to pollution.

After traces of hydrocarbons were detected upstream, organisers of the European Aquatics Championships suspended training dives on Thursday, prompting fears that the contest might have to be cancelled. But the affected area was swiftly treated and the event went ahead.

The mood on the river was festive. A DJ played Latin and rock anthems between dive sequences. "Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready for the show?" he called out in English. "Oui!" the crowd roared back.

The spectators applauded each dive as Métro trains thundered across an elevated section of the Bir-Hakeim bridge behind the diving tower. "The

Mallorca battles to turn tide against overtourism
Page 24

Party faithful worship at feet of political masters
Page 26

STEVENS TOMAS/ABACA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Paris is playing host to the European Aquatics Championships, with athletes launching themselves from a 20m platform into the Seine at the weekend

dives are so graceful," said Justine Pacheco, 25, a spectator. As a member of the Paris fire brigade's water rescue unit, which operates on the Seine, she swims in the river most mornings. "It's for training and also so we get to know the different parts of the river," she said.

Asked if she was concerned about pathogens in the water, Pacheco said: "I've been swimming nearly every day for four months and I've never been ill. I'm more concerned about catfish."

The Wels catfish — a predatory and rather forbidding-looking species that can grow to about 9ft (2.7m) — was first recorded in the Seine basin around 1980. Introduced for recreational fishing, it has become widespread. There were reports of catfish biting swimmers in Germany last year, although none have been recorded in the Seine.

"We also see quite a lot of rats along the river," Pacheco said. "We're all vaccinated against leptospirosis, [a bacterial infection that can be spread through rodents' urine]."

Laurent, 56, a cybersecurity engineer, said the high diving had "brought back some of the feeling of the Paris Olympics". Open-water swimming races were held in the Seine for the 2024 Games after the murky river was cleaned up. Vast underground tanks were built to prevent sewage overflowing into the water during storms, treatment plants were upgraded and houseboats were connected to the sewer system.

Five public bathing sites have since opened on the Seine and the Canal Saint-Martin during July and August.

At the Bras Marie swimming area, near the Notre-Dame Cathedral, dozens of people took to the water on Saturday. Enclosed by pontoons, the site resembles an open-air swimming pool. Dozens more people sunbathed on the floating platforms around it.

Among the swimmers was Alex Marsh, 31, a rugby referee from London who moved to Paris last year. Asked if he was worried about water quality, he said: "I think it's awesome what they've done. It's really hot and I'm going to have a dip."

Many Parisians were sceptical when the bathing sites opened, but swimming is steadily gaining popularity. Jean-Pierre, 54, said: "It still looks murky, and I did think it might be a bit risky when I started swimming here, but I haven't heard of anyone getting ill."

The Seine's water quality began deteriorating at the end of the 19th century, and swimming was banned in 1923. By the 1970s, scientists said the stretch of the river passing through Paris was "biologically dead".

New treatment plants gradually transformed the river. This week it will host open-water swimming races, even as barges carry goods and boats take tourists past Notre-Dame and the Eiffel Tower. Once regarded mainly as a transport route and even at times as an open sewer, the Seine is now being reclaimed for recreation.

Ukrainian teenager missing for 4 years is fighting for Russia

Russia
Marc Bennetts

It was two days before Oleksandr Mustyatse's 15th birthday when Russian troops poured across the border with Ukraine in 2022 and occupied his home village of Krynky, in the Kherson region.

Mustyatse was officially designated as missing by the Ukrainian government on its Children of War website, which lists the thousands of underage victims of Russia's invasion. Nothing was heard of him until last month, when it emerged that Mustyatse, by now 19, had joined the Russian army. It was the first known case of a child who had been considered missing by Kyiv taking up arms against Ukraine as an adult, said Mykola Kuleba, Ukraine's top official for children's rights.

Photographs on Mustyatse's page on VK, Russia's version of Facebook, showed him dressed in a Russian military uniform and wearing a baseball cap decorated with the pro-war Z symbol and the colours of the Russian flag.

The discovery came after President Zelensky had accused the Kremlin of brainwashing children in occupied Ukrainian territories into fighting for Russia once they turn 18. An estimated 1.6 million children live in these areas.

Mustyatse's VK page had not been updated since last year and it was unclear if he was still alive. However, last week activists with Back to Ukraine, a group that investigates the militarisation of children, discovered he was using another online account. He told them that he did not consider himself a traitor to Ukraine. "Russia has always been in my heart," he said. He did not comment further. He did not reply to a message from The Times.

An unnamed soldier from his unit told the activists that Mustyatse had been injured during an assault on Ukrainian positions in the autumn and treated at the Burdenko military hospital in Moscow. "Russia takes children, breaks them, remakes them for itself and throws them into battle," Back to Ukraine wrote on social media.

Mustyatse remains listed as missing on the Children of Ukraine website. However, he has also now been added to Myrotvorets, a controversial Ukrainian website, which described him as an "accomplice in Russia's crimes against Ukraine". It listed his home address, as well as the names of his parents, who are still in Krynky. Some Ukrainians who support Moscow have been targeted after being added to the blacklist.

Kateryna Rashevska, a legal expert at the Regional Centre for Human Rights in Kyiv, said that teenage boys such as Mustyatse were the victims of political indoctrination. About 400 Ukrainians who were under 18 when their home regions were seized by Moscow are said to have died on the battlefield after being forcibly mobilised into Russia's army.

"By presenting service in the armed forces of the occupying power as the only available path for Ukrainian adolescents, the Russian Federation commits acts amounting to a war crime, as propaganda in this context serves as a disguised form of coercive mobilisation," Rashevska said.

Children from Ukraine have been sent to "military-patriotic" camps, according to Russian state media's own reports.

In 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for President Putin and another official on charges of abducting about 20,000 Ukrainian children. Moscow denies the allegations.

Oleksandr Mustyatse was seen with a Z-sign cap

Germany facing sabotage attacks daily, says minister

Germany
Liz Cookman

Germany is frequently targeted by hybrid warfare attacks from abroad, the country's interior minister said as more drone incidents were reported in Europe, increasing security fears.

"We're not at war, but we are the daily target of hybrid warfare," Alexander Dobrindt told Bild am Sonntag. "Espionage, sabotage, cyberattacks, or covert operations by foreign powers aimed at destabilising Germany or inflicting direct harm are a constant reality."

He added that Germany was setting up a new drone security research centre to address these security threats. The facility, due to open this month, will be at the test airfield of the German Aerospace Centre in the state of Saxony-Anhalt and will develop and test drone defence technology.

Germany's armed forces said two drones were spotted at a base in Mechernich, close to the Belgian border, last week. The base has a high-security underground complex that stores military equipment and spare parts. It is also where US Patriot air defence systems are serviced and repaired.

A drone carrying explosives was also found last week at Leipzig airport, close to a Ukrainian aircraft loaded with military ammunition. Police later carried out a controlled explosion.

The discovery indicated a "new level of danger", Dobrindt said.

The German government has not publicly accused Moscow of involvement. The Russian embassy in Berlin said it was a "fabricated provocation".

Holiday isle battling to turn the tide against overtourism

ALAMY; FRANCISCO UBILLA/REUTERS

The quaint wooden tram brings crowds of tourists to Soller every year, but residents are fed up with soaring prices for housing — leading to protests this weekend

Thousands on Mallorca march against a ‘plague’ of visitors driving up prices, **David Sharrock** writes from Soller

When he arrived at the prettiest square in Mallorca to find it closed for business, with the terraces empty and a noisy demonstration against people like him taking place, Bob Bogle from Dunbar could not disguise his disappointment.

“I was looking forward to a coffee in the plaza,” he shrugged as he took photographs of the anti-tourism protesters filling Soller’s Constitution Square on Saturday. He has holidayed in Mallorca every summer for the past 20 years.

“I saw the trouble in Palma,” he said, referring to last month when police fired rubber bullets to disperse a crowd of protesters. “My daughter saw people spraying water at tourists. I have the impression that the general anger isn’t aimed at individuals but it would be a shame if it went in that direction.”

Mallorca has reached its limit, according to demonstrators who marched through this picturesque mountain town in Mallorca’s “Valley of Gold”, famed for its orange groves and historic wooden tram that runs between Palma and Soller, cutting right through Constitution Square.

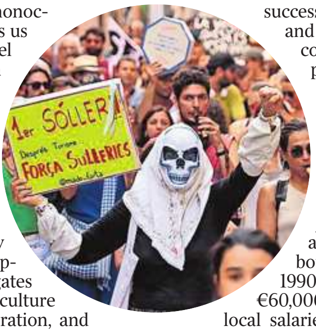
To the lively rhythm of local drummers and a quartet of *xeremiers* — the local style of bagpipes — several thousand protesters marched down Carrer de la Lluna, normally rammed with tourists. “*Miris on miris, tot son guiris*” was the cry, meaning “Wherever you look, it’s all foreigners”. The protesters waved banners that translated as: “We are not your souvenir”, “From your bread we can’t even eat soup”, and “Tourism is a plague”.

Some signs were written in English, aimed as jibes at tourists. “The only thing coming home is you,” read one, in a reference to the World Cup.

Police stood back, with instructions to avoid the scenes in Palma. Nevertheless, 14 riot vans were standing by.

“We live in a town and on an island that cannot take any more,” Sofia Zamrik, one of the organisers, told The Times. “We reached the limit years ago; we have been demonstrating for years, and yet we still are not being heard.”

She insisted tourists were not the target. “It is against the economic model of tourism monoculture, which makes us and the island feel like foreigners in our own home, which means we cannot access decent housing, which means that whenever a shop closes another one opens that is designed exclusively for tourist consumption, which relegates our language and culture to the role of decoration, and which causes us to lose our sense of community.¨



By design or not, the atmosphere of the protest seemed hostile to tourists. One banner compared tourists to West Bank settlers, while some participants wore shirts bearing the slogan “Foreigners Out”. A French tourist called the protest “a problem, because we tourists bring in the money that enables the local people to make a living”.

But Andrew Bowden, who moved his jewellery business from Cambridge to Soller nine years ago because of Brexit, recognises that ever-growing visitor numbers are not sustainable. “I’ve seen a lot of change and a lot of it is not for the better. The numbers have doubled since we got here. The last two years, it has been out of control at times. The town council tries to solve it, but the problem’s too big for them,” he said. He now only goes to the beach at six in the morning to avoid crowds.

The Balearic Islands recorded a record 19 million tourists last year, while Mallorca alone received nearly two million in June. That success has brought jobs and wealth, but also congestion, housing pressure and growing anger among residents.

Xisca Comes and Miquel Palmes, who travelled from their house in Palma, join every protest against tourism. “We bought our house in 1990 for the equivalent of €60,000, a cost which we, on local salaries, could pay down reasonably fast and easily,” Palmes said.

“Our neighbours on both sides now are Austrians and Swedes who paid ten times what it cost us. These prices are now far beyond what our son can afford, even though he earns a good salary.” Comes added: “All the limits have been passed. The politicians have decided that they prefer that the tourists come and we leave. They are expelling us. A lot of the time you no longer feel as if you fit in.”

The spiralling cost of living is affecting public services. The courts are in crisis because court assistants, administrators and clerks on salaries of between €1,600 and €2,000 per month cannot afford to live on the island.

Carlos Gómez Martinez, the president of the High Court of Justice of the Balearic Islands, admitted that such employees would have to flat-share, even after more than 30 years in their careers. He wants housing to be built for staff inside a new courts complex.

The hospitality sector faces the same problem, with the entry price for a room in a shared flat at €700 a month. The minimum wage in Spain is just over €1,221 per month.

Since 2015, property prices in Mallorca have increased by 97 per cent, according to the property portal Fotocasa, not accounting for inflation. Across the Balearics, prices per square metre have risen by 45-50 per cent in the past five years, and foreign buyers now account for about a third of all property transactions, according to the estate agent Imperial Properties.

Beyond Soller lies the Serra de Tramuntana — 60 miles of spectacular viewpoints from which to observe the sun slowly sinking into the sea. However, this Wednesday the road will be closed. One of the best natural vantage points in Spain from which to view the solar eclipse has been declared off-limits to visitors. The announcement, made weeks ago, was intended to discourage even more tourists from arriving on the island.

Emergency declared as huge wildfire spreads

Canada The federal government said yesterday it would assist British Columbia by providing shelter and accommodation for residents as wildfires forced thousands of people to evacuate,.

The Bald Range wildfire, which prompted a state of emergency to be issued and the evacuation of about 18,000 people, had spread to more than 10,300 hectares at the weekend as firefighters continued to battle the blaze.

“Last night, I approved a request for federal assistance from British Columbia to provide shelter and accommodations for people who have been forced to leave their homes due to wildfires across the province,” Eleanor Olszewski, Canada’s minister of emergency management and community resilience, said in a social media post. “I have tasked federal officials, led by the Government Operations Centre at Public Safety Canada, to work with the province to ensure support reaches those who need it most,” the minister said.

Over the past 24 hours, southern British Columbia continued to see fires spreading due to hot and dry weather, the province’s Wildfire Service said.

Ten helicopters and a night vision helicopter were operating, but were hindered by smoke and turbulence. The province had personnel from Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico supporting hundreds of local firefighters and expects additional international resources to arrive shortly, it said.

Ceuta row deepens

Spain About 200 visitors from Italy were checked at Spain’s six largest airports on the first day of border controls after a dispute with Rome over migration. The controls on flights and ships will remain until September 7 in response to similar measures imposed by Italy after 72,000 migrants arrived from Morocco in the Spanish territory of Ceuta.

Typhoon hits China

China Typhoon Dolphin hit the east coast yesterday, bringing 93mph winds and rain to the provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian. More than 300,000 people were evacuated from the area and Shanghai’s two airports cancelled 1,300 flights. In the Philippines, seven people are missing in the northern city of Baguio after a landslide caused by the typhoon.

Drugs seized from boat

Indonesia The authorities have seized 1.3 tonnes of ketamine, worth tens of millions of dollars, from a foreign-flagged vessel. A navy ship intercepted MV King Sun as it entered Indonesian waters on Thursday. Officials had received intelligence in February that it was carrying suspicious cargo from Thailand, the national narcotics agency said.

Skinning game banned

United States Cornell University in New York state has banned the skinning of game in kitchens after Aaron Chin and a friend shot a bear on a hunting trip and carved it up in the communal area. There were no rules that prohibited it. A complaint was lodged but they were cleared of wrongdoing. A spokesman said the new policy provides “clarity”.

Grand finale for village’s saviour

Italy
James Imam San Pancrazio

STEPHANIE GENGOTTI FOR THE TIMES

Francis Prins, above, on stage at the reopened theatre, and Claudia Pietrelli have applauded the big efforts of John Werich

When the footlights came on at San Pancrazio’s small theatre for the first time in half a century, many in the audience were moved to tears. Until recently, the village of just 150 inhabitants had seemed destined to disappear. Yet here it was welcoming an acclaimed Swedish pianist for a sell-out performance attended by expats, well-heeled visitors and locals.

Nestled in the Valdarno hills near Tuscany’s Chianti wine country, San Pancrazio had long been blighted by depopulation. Seven years ago the only shop in the village looked certain to close. Now it has celebrated an unlikely revival with visitors and residents flocking to the elegant stone theatre for a series of five concerts, starting with a recital by Per Tengstrand.

“When we entered the theatre, I saw so many eyes filled with tears,” said Laura Nannini, a 58-year-old lawyer who grew up in San Pancrazio.

The plan to revive the 80-seat theatre was masterminded by John Werich, a Swedish photographer and interior designer. He is determined to get the village back on its feet, having already saved the shop, transformed a 17th-century noble palazzo into a boutique hotel and brought contemporary art to the small medieval church down the road.

“How many villages with 150 people have a little theatre?” said Werich, 40.

Werich’s parents made their money producing plastic components for Ikea and he grew up in the countryside near Gothenburg. He moved to Florence 20 years ago to study design, fashion and art history, going on to run an English bookshop. He discovered San Pancrazio in 2010 when his parents bought a villa overlooking the village.

It had little to offer at the time. Almost all the businesses the village had in the 1990s — a second village shop, butcher, barber, carpentry and tobacconist — had long since closed. “Nobody really came here,” Werich said.

Many of Tuscany’s hilltop communities are slowly dying, and San Pancrazio’s population has fallen from about 230 in the late 1990s.

In 2019, when the village shop faced closure, Werich bought it for €20,000 and moved there permanently. He refurbished it, stocking everyday essentials alongside local produce, and added tables where residents could meet for coffee or an evening *aperitivo*. “The whole local community comes here for a drink before dinner,” Werich said. “It’s not just a shop, it’s really become a meeting place for the village.”

Next, Werich and his partner, a book publisher based in Stockholm, bought Palazzo Tiglio, intending to turn it into a hotel. The cost of the renovation rose from €700,000 to €3.9 million after workers found structural problems. Werich’s partner provided most of the money.

The palace reopened in 2021 as a seven-room boutique hotel with a restaurant. It has yet to make a profit, but has attracted foreign visitors. Of the 30 expat households in San Pancrazio and the surrounding countryside, seven have bought properties since the hotel opened. Four were former guests.

The hotel has created jobs for 15 people, nine of whom live in the village.

“The shop was in terrible condition,” said Claudia Pietrelli, 61, who helps to run it. “We really turned it around.”

Now Werich has turned his attention to the village’s cultural life. After the parish handed him the keys to a 13th-century church it had been using for storage, he began staging contemporary art exhibitions there. The theatre was his next and most ambitious project. Built by residents in 1916, it had been closed for about 50 years. The €80,000 restoration was funded largely by villagers through fundraisers.

Francis Prins, 64, a Dutch estate agent who now lives near San Pancrazio, said it was now a better place. “I bring my clients here because you make a good impression on the hotel’s terrace with its amazing view,” she said.

Nannini, the lawyer, said she was initially wary of Werich’s plans. “But then I really embraced John’s projects because they’re interesting,” she said. “Now there’s art. There’s music. The important thing is to have a real vision for our small community.”

Not everyone is enthusiastic. Simonetta Saba, 60, who has lived in Tuscany for three decades, moved to San Pancrazio eight years ago looking for a slower pace of life. “Before, it was a quiet, peaceful little village. Now it’s full of foreigners,” she said.

When asked which area of the village might be up for refurbishment next, Werich demurred.

He will do other things, but said: “Nothing has been really thought through. There’s no master plan. I just make it up as I go along.”

Goodbye, Beth: senator’s vintage vacuum takes one last wheeze

United States
Will Pavia New York

The death notice for the vacuum cleaner was posted at 3.52pm on Saturday by Senator Chuck Grassley in a message that seemed, in its abruptness and grammatical oddities, to hint at genuine heartbreak.

Grassley is the longest serving Republican senator in US history and for most of his 45 years in Congress, in a fickle age of politics, there had been one constant servant: his mother-in-law’s old vacuum cleaner.

He named it Beth, after a former staffer. Beth, a beige vacuum with a red dust bag, had been with his mother-in-law for 15 years before joining the Grassley household in 1992. “OLD FAITHFUL,” he called her. “She never lets me down.” It sometimes seemed, to his followers, that he mentioned Beth more than his wife of 70 years. Now she had taken her last, wheezing breath.

“U willl see BETH no more,” he wrote. “See black that’s from electrical sparks. It’s not safe to use anymore. GOOD BYE BETH . U hv been a real workhorse. Ur namesake still is hard worker. I will miss u.”

It was a eulogy that seemed, in its clunking manner, to mirror the characteristics of its subject. It was almost poetry.

Tim Scott, a Republican senator for South Carolina, was among the first to offer condolences. “Sorry for your loss,” he wrote on X. “They don’t build them like they used to.”

Josh Turek, an Iowa Democrat and state representative who is running for the Senate against Grassley’s Republican colleague, said: “Sounds like Beth had a heck of a run.”

There were, naturally, those who sought to see, in the passing of a Hoover, a larger political point. Opponents of Grassley made pointed remarks about term limits and the decline of American manufacturing. One supporter claimed that it was Beth’s dying wish that Grassley and other senators immediately pass legislation, championed by President Trump, requiring voters to show passports or birth certificates to vote.

Chuck Grassley eulogised his “old faithful” online

Grassley is not the first member of Congress to develop a strong attachment to a piece of machinery. John Boehner, a former Speaker of the House, appears frequently with his lawn mower. The senator John Kennedy has a cross trainer in his garage that he has named Margaret, “after Margaret Thatcher because both kick butt”. His wife, Becky, “won’t let me bring Margaret in the house”, he said in a video posted this year. So he rides Margaret in his garage and then lifts weights, watched over, metaphorically speaking, by his iron lady companion.

Grassley’s Hoover, Beth, would generally appear in his public pronouncements around Thanksgiving. His wife and daughter were cooking for 30, he announced in 2018. “So my housework contribution begins,” he said. “This is my machine.”

He named the machine after Beth Levine, who served for 20 years as his communications adviser. Whenever he posted about his Hoover, Levine would receive messages from friends. “I have loved seeing each one of the posts and will always appreciate that that’s how he remembers my work for him and the people of Iowa,” she told The Times.

“Not only has it been fun and an honour to have a US senator name his vacuum after you (yes, I would call it an honour!), it’s been a great way to keep in touch with former colleagues and friends.”

Grassley would write about the vacuum during other holidays too. “Faithful Beth has about 3 hours of cleaning to get ready for 25/30,” he wrote on Christmas Day in 2022. The following year followers of Beth received some footage of the vacuum and the senator in action together, sucking the dust from a large blue rug. “She never lets me down & im grateful I can count on OLD FAITHFUL,” he wrote.

But all political lives, unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure, said Enoch Powell. For that is the nature of politics and of human affairs and of vacuum cleaners.

Yet for all those lamenting the end of an era, there were others who said that Beth was not yet dead, that she only needed a new power cord. “I manage a hardware & electronics shop in Ankeny,” one of these said, beneath his announcement. “We would be honored to pick up and repair Beth free of charge.”

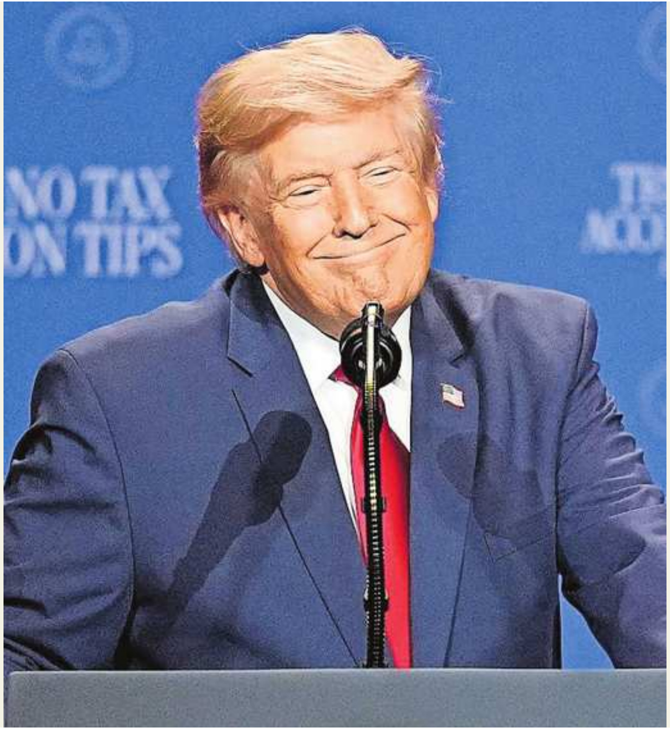
Trump's good hair day turns heads

President Trump was on a stage in Las Vegas, telling his supporters that drug prices were coming down, that American manufacturing would soon be growing fast, that exports were "on fire" (Will Pavia writes).

But it was hard for some viewers to concentrate on any of this, for they could not stop looking at his hair. On the top of his head, where only days ago there was a thin and wiry thicket, there was now a golden, glossy rug. Was it his own? Had he borrowed it from a lounge singer, or a woodland creature?

People were soon posting images of Trump from a week earlier and asking how midwinter, on his scalp, had been turned into this glorious summer.

JOHN LOCHER/AP; DENNIS SCHNEIDLER/IMAGN IMAGES/REUTERS



President Trump's golden locks while speaking in Las Vegas. In New Jersey at the weekend, he had bruises on his arms and plasters on his fingers

"Our 80-year-old president appears to have grown a new head of hair overnight," said Jon Favreau, a former speechwriter for President Obama who is now the host of *Pod Save America.* His co-host, Dan Pfieffer, felt it was "an entirely different colour than the one from a few days ago".

But, according to the White House, this fabulous new look was actually due to the LED lighting at the Red Rock Casino, where Trump was speaking. "Lighting is everything," Karoline Leavitt, Trump's press secretary, told the Wall Street Journal.

One of Trump's biographers, Harry Hurt III, claimed that Trump underwent a painful scalp reduction surgery in 1989 to eliminate a bald spot, while two of Trump's doctors during his first term said he was taking the hair growth medication finasteride.

In January this year, New York Magazine quoted a White House aide who said Trump had allowed his hair to go grey as "his only concession to age". By then questions had been raised about his swollen ankles (a symptom, said his doctors, of a common circulatory condition), and bruises that had appeared on his right hand. "This is only from shaking hands," Trump told a reporter. When bruises also appeared on his left hand, in Davos, the White House said he had accidentally hit it against a table.

At the weekend, he was seen at a golf club in New Jersey with bruises on his arms and a couple of plasters on his fingers. The White House has insisted that he remains in excellent health.

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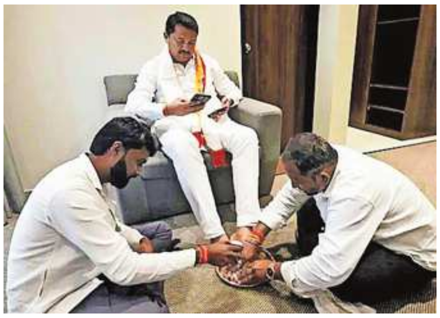
Party faithful worship at feet of political masters

India
Amrit Dhillon Delhi



An image of two staff washing the feet of Nana Patole has led to soul-searching in India, where it is common to see a cardboard cutout of Narendra Modi around town as a chance for the adoring public to take a photo

The politician relaxes in an armchair, peering at his phones. He does not deign to glance at the two underlings who are washing his feet with milk. Between prayers and chants, they shower petals over their boss.

The recent image of two employees washing the feet of Nana Patole, a senior member of India's Congress Party, at his home in Mumbai has aroused indignation and highlighted the persistence of sycophancy in Indian political culture.

Patole responded by saying he had not wanted party workers to wash his feet during Guru Purnima, a festival during which people honour gurus and teachers, but they had insisted. "They are like my family members," he told reporters. "It was nothing but a gesture offered by them."

The Congress Party, which governed India for much of the period after independence, is notorious for the servility shown towards members of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Jawaharlal Nehru was the first prime minister of India, for 17 years from 1947. His daughter Indira Gandhi held the same post for 15 years before she was assassinated, and her son Rajiv took over until 1989. His wife, Sonia Gandhi, later led the party for 20 years.

Senior ministers have been seen touching the feet of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi's children, Rahul and Priyanka, and the party has named airports, universities and stadiums after the dynasty's members.

But obsequiousness runs across the spectrum of Indian politics, not to mention the civil service.

Personal assistants, their bodies bowed, scurry after officials as they get out their car, carrying their briefcase and fussing over "sir" as though he were a princeling. Touching or washing the feet of someone seen as socially superior, powerful or merely elderly is an act of homage rooted in Hindu tradition.

However, it jars with modern sensibilities in a democracy where everyone is perceived to be equal, said Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr, a political analyst. "What is repulsive is the way this cultural tradition has been extended to politics where simply bending the knee is seen as insufficient," Rao said. "But be under no illusions. It's not always sincere. Often it's opportunistic. The person being obsequious is usually looking for a favour."

The fawning can lead to comic results. Supporters of Jayaram Jayalalithaa, chief minister of Tamil Nadu between 1991 and 2016, used to prostrate themselves in her presence, often competing to be the most fawning. One fan, Shihan Hussaini, a sculptor, painted 56 portraits of her in his blood to celebrate her 56th birthday in 2004.

In 2014, Gokula Indira, the state's handlooms and textiles minister, called Jayalalithaa "the milk of brightness from the circular moon". Party workers began speeches by invoking her "golden feet".

When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India in 2014 it vowed to end the sycophancy of what it called "Congress culture". But, after more than a decade in office, it appears to have succumbed to it. Such is the personality cult around Narendra Modi, the prime minister, that cabinet ministers are unable to speak about their work without attributing their achievements to Modi's blessings.

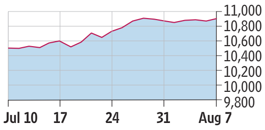
Chief ministers take out double-page newspaper adverts heaping praise on his leadership. His image is pasted on every welfare item or service provided by the government, from sacks of rice to vaccines. Life-size images of Modi adorn many railway platforms to allow travellers to pose for photographs with him.

No pictures emerged of him having his feet washed during Guru Purnima, but not for want of offers. The Indian actor Sudesh Berry announced he wanted to "wash Modi's feet and drink that water". He said he respected Modi without having met him, "just as we have not seen God but still worship him".

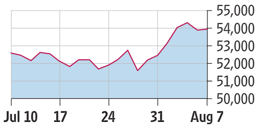
Business

WORLD MARKETS (Friday's close. Change on the week)

FTSE 100
10,901.09 (+33.04) ▲

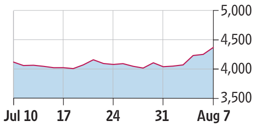


Dow Jones (midday)
53,978.78 (+1,493.75) ▲

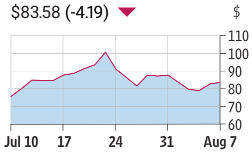


COMMODITIES

Gold
$4,371.89 (+328.48) ▲

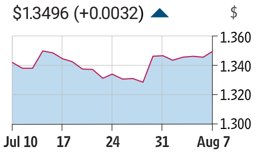


Brent crude (6pm)
$83.58 (-4.19) ▼

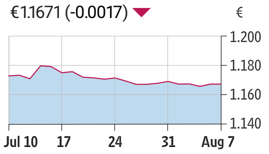


CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.3496 (+0.0032) ▲



£/€
€1.1671 (-0.0017) ▼



Hiring for full-time jobs stabilises for first time since Liz Truss

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

"Rays of light" are beginning to show in the labour market with full-time hiring stabilising for the first time since Liz Truss's short-lived 2022 premiership, according to a closely-watched survey.

The new data suggested a long downturn in the UK's jobs market may be ending after firms withstood a £25 billion payroll tax raid, steep increases to the minimum wage and numerous external economic shocks. An index of permanent hiring produced by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and KPMG hit 50 points in July, the first time it has not been below that mark — which indicates a contraction in staff placements — in nearly four years.

Businesses in London took on new full-time staff at the quickest pace since 2022, the REC-KPMG report on jobs showed, but permanent placements continued to decline in the north of England, highlighting to Andy Burnham the central role that London will play in his plans to revive economic growth.

Maxine Bligh, the confederation's chief membership officer, said: "Rays of light are beginning to break through for the job market as employers revive hiring plans. Remarkably, this is the first month without a decline in permanent placements since Liz Truss resigned as prime minister in 2022, underlining just how prolonged the downturn in permanent hiring has been."

Companies have been battered by cost shocks over the past five years, dampening recruitment plans. Energy prices surged after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Rachel Reeves increased employers' national insurance contributions by £25 billion in 2024 and the war in the Middle East has sent oil prices on an upward spiral.

However, the survey, which is viewed as a proxy for the health of the labour market because of the low quality of official data, signalled that businesses are on the cusp of a hiring revival.

The vacancies index, at 47.1, was the highest since September 2024, if still below the 50-point growth threshold. Vacancies for part-time roles rose at the fastest pace since August 2023.

Although good news for workers and the wider economy, the REC-KPMG data may be a source of discomfort for the Bank of England. Pay growth for full-time staff hit a six-month high.

The figures contrast with official data from the Office for National Statistics, which showed private sector pay growth down to a six-year low.

Heathrow in bid for £9bn runway funds

Passengers will pick up tab for cash injection

Alistair Osborne

Heathrow is calling for as much as £9 billion in additional early funding from passengers to help finance its third runway project.

The airport's demands for the vast upfront sum, which are certain to infuriate the airlines, are disclosed in a letter on the UK Civil Aviation Authority's website from its biggest customer, IAG — the owner of British Airways, Iberia, Vueling and Aer Lingus.

Airlines are already angry at the regulator for its decision, last month, to allow Heathrow £320 million of so-called "early costs", covering planning expenses during 2025 and 2026, for the £49 billion expansion project. Carriers argue that permitting such costs leaves passengers paying for the runway through higher ticket prices long before it is in service and even if it is not built.

That move by the CAA will put 30p on landing charges from 2028. Heathrow is already the world's most expensive airport, levying charges of about £26 per passenger. On the same maths, allowing a further £9 billion of costs would add almost £8.50 to the price of each ticket.

Heathrow is seeking further early costs recovery as it looks to secure planning permission for the project, which would include the construction of a 3,500-metre northwest runway and sixth terminal, and lift annual capacity to about 150 million passengers, versus the 84.5 million it handled last year.

It is thought that Heathrow is looking to secure a big increase in advance costs so that it can strike deals to buy land as it seeks a development consent order (DCO) for the project.

The letter, written to the CAA in May before it took its final decision to allow £320 million of early costs, is from Raghbir Pattar, IAG's director of corporate development.

In it, he referred to the CAA's earlier draft ruling, saying: "Since the publication of the draft decision, we have been advised by HAL [Heathrow Airport Ltd] that they will be seeking, during 2026, to secure £9 billion in financial commitments for future pre-DCO related spend. It is critical that the CAA's current approach to the 2025-26 costs is not treated as establishing any precedent for the regulatory treatment of expenditure from 2027 onwards."

He also argued that "permitting recovery of early expansion costs prior to the grant of a DCO risks transferring speculative, pre-consent development risk on to today's passengers without adequate scrutiny or effective consumer protection".

Heathrow is owned by some of the world's wealthiest investors, together managing trillions of dollars of funds. They span sovereign wealth funds from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and China; Ardian, the Paris-based infrastructure fund; and the Australian Retirement Trust.

A Heathrow spokesman said it had no comment on a figure that was in a letter from IAG to the CAA. It repeated previous remarks that the runway would deliver "a real economic boost to every region and nation of the country. We have been clear from the start that unlocking the private investment that will deliver these benefits requires a supportive regulatory framework".

The £9 billion figure was in one of Heathrow's own documents.

MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES

SONY
ARENA
Canon

What's the Story? **Arena, which filmed events such as Liam Gallagher's Glastonbury concert before it collapsed in 2021 amid fraud allegations, is at the centre of a £1 billion court battle between insolvency firms and Lloyds Bank** Page 28

Mastercard lawsuit cost £41m in fees

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Lawyers in the decade-long Mastercard class-action lawsuit have racked up more than £41 million in fees despite consumers getting a maximum payout of £45 each.

The new payout figures have emerged after the litigation funding company that backed the action dropped its threat to bring arbitration proceedings against Walter Merricks, the lead claimant, over his decision to settle the dispute for £200 million. The claim was initially valued at being worth £14 billion to British consumers.

The Times has been told by sources close to the claim that "project costs" incurred by Merricks — fees for lawyers and experts — amount to £41.5 million. The lawyers involved in the case have worked for the London offices of a collection of leading US law firms, including Quinn Emanuel and Willkie Farr & Gallagher.

The competition appeal tribunal has authorised the release of a tranche of the £100 million that is allocated to consumer payouts. Merricks, a former financial ombudsman, has estimated that only 5 per cent of the eligible 46 million class members will bother to apply for a share. That means that the likely top amount of compensation will be about £45 for each consumer.

Merricks brought the landmark claim against the US credit card company in 2016 after the European Commission ruled that Mastercard had breached competition rules. In January 2019, the commission fined it the equivalent of £504 million. Merricks claimed that for 16 years until 2008, Mastercard unfairly inflated its fees when retailers accepted credit card payments.

The claim was originally valued as being worth £14 billion, but that figure gradually fell. Merricks and Mastercard agreed to settle the dispute for £200 million at the end of 2024, with the company emphasising that it did so without accepting any liability. That agreement was approved by a tribunal judge last year.

By that stage, Merricks's claim was funded by Innsworth Capital, whose

Continued on page 29

Need to know

1 Britain will be at increased risk of nationwide blackouts because of an electricity system rule change designed to save money and help hit the government's green targets, leading power generators have warned. **Page 1**

2 Heathrow is calling for as much as £9 billion in additional early funding from passengers to help finance its third runway project. Airlines argue that permitting such costs leaves passengers paying for the runway through higher ticket prices long before it is in service and even if it is not built. **Page 27**

3 "Rays of light" are beginning to show in the labour market as full-time hiring stabilises for the first time since Liz Truss resigned as prime minister in 2022, a closely watched survey released today shows. **Page 27**

4 Lawyers in the decade-long Mastercard class-action lawsuit have racked up more than £41 million in fees despite consumers getting a maximum payout of £45 each. **Page 27**

5 Lloyds Banking Group is battling two High Court claims over alleged failings in relation to a £1.2 billion lending scam. The claims, which could have broader consequences for how the banking industry works with businesses, have been brought by insolvency practitioners working on the Arena Television collapse.

6 UK government bonds are set to benefit from volatile asset moves in the United States and Japan, giving a boost to Andy Burnham's new government before the autumn budget. Analysts expect gilt yields to fall over the remainder of the year, as the UK's inflation outlook supports the chances of interest rate cuts. **Page 30**

7 Berkshire Hathaway bought nearly $20 billion more in shares than it sold in the second quarter, as its new chief executive, Greg Abel, put the company's enormous cash reserves into action. This reverses a period in which Warren Buffett trimmed stock holdings. **Page 32**

> As the world shifts against free trade, the Buy British campaign isn't as daft as it looks

Simon French, page 31

For expert business analysis subscribe to the business newsletter thetimes.com/newsletters

Could drought and heat change

As temperatures soar, the business of getting produce on the shelves is getting even harder, writes **Guy Taylor**

When Asda mapped out how rising temperatures could affect its entire global food operations more than a decade ago, the findings were stark.

Considered groundbreaking at the time, *The Challenge of a Changing Climate* was the first proper attempt by a food retailer to put hard numbers on the threat. It found that 95 per cent of the supermarket's fresh produce range could be affected by more extreme weather and water scarcity in the years ahead.

Although the report was largely forgotten, British supermarkets are contending with much of what it predicted as drought grips England and Wales and crop yields plunge across Europe.

Grain harvests in the UK are set to shrink by about 2.5 million tonnes this year, according to analysis by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit. Those of barley, oats and rapeseed are expected to fall to 19.5 million tonnes, the lowest since detailed records began in 1984.

Growers of everything from green vegetables such as broccoli and peas to wheat, potatoes and olives are feeling the pinch, raising the spectre of shortages and rising prices.

Bosses at supermarkets including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi and Waitrose have written to Andy Burnham warning that Britain's food security is at risk from heatwaves and wildfires.

Others criticise years of "woeful" investment in water infrastructure after not a single big reservoir was built in the UK for more than three decades. "The reality is, if the rivers dry up and you haven't got any reservoirs, then no matter how good a farmer you are and how much you've planned, you're going to be screwed," said one former chief executive of a big British grocer.

On the shopfloor, food retailers have been forced to adapt quickly to the heatwave. Kate McCrae, retail director at the Co-op, the mutual which runs about 2,500 food stores across the UK, said: "We have seen more high temperature peaks than I can remember. We've had to stand back and think about things in a very different way."

Water, ice, fresh fruit and salads are high in demand but in shorter supply during sweltering temperatures, which has meant cutting back on shelf space for items less popular in hot weather, such as tinned soup.

While supermarkets have started buying more lettuce and broccoli from abroad, smaller and more adaptable vegetable alternatives are also helping offset shortfalls in availability.

Sales growth in baby cucumbers has surged in recent months, according to the Co-op, as harvests for whole cucumbers stall and British imports, typically from Spain and Morocco, decline sharply. The mutual has also removed promotions on tenderstem broccoli to maintain supplies amid a particularly weak Cornish harvest.

Even when supply is adequate, there is a battle to prevent excessive spoilage. Costs for refrigeration and air conditioning are increasing, including instore fridges and freezers and cold chain logistics further down the supply chain. The boss of Britain's Cold Chain Federation, which represents cold-storage suppliers, warned this summer that the country's ability to supply fresh food was under "severe pressure" and warehouses had been pushed to their limits at points. Consumers have reported failures of supermarket freezers and delivery systems.

In response, Waitrose has announced plans to introduce "Mediter-

Lloyds faces £1.2bn lawsuits over lending fraud

James Hurley

Lloyds Banking Group is battling two High Court claims over alleged failings in relation to a £1.2 billion lending scam.

The claims, which could have broader consequences for how the banking industry works with businesses, have been brought by insolvency practitioners working on the Arena Television collapse. One claim is worth up to £1.1 billion, and another is for £280 million.

Lloyds denies allegations that it had enough information to know it should not have processed payments related to the alleged fraud.

Arena, which was based in Surrey and worked on events including the Glastonbury festival for the BBC, collapsed in November 2021 amid allegations that it had been borrowing against television equipment that did not exist or was already pledged to other lenders.

According to Arena's liquidators, from Kroll, Richard Yeowart, Arena's owner, "misappropriated proceeds of asset-backed lending in excess of £1.2 billion with over 55 different lenders", including Bank of Scotland and Lloyds.

Liquidators have alleged that Yeowart removed genuine serial numbers from its broadcasting equipment and replaced them with forged labels. Falsified numbers were then allegedly presented to asset-based lenders, allowing Arena to secure multiple loans on the same piece of equipment.

The liquidators also alleged that Yeowart and his co-director, Robert Hopkinson, presented a company called Sentinel as the buyer of equipment in order that Sentinel could raise funds against the supposed assets. The funding was passed to Arena.

According to Sentinel's administrators, from Quantuma, Sentinel "sold" non-existent equipment to lenders, which leased the fictitious equipment to Arena. Sentinel paid roughly £1.1 billion to Arena from funds it raised from lenders. Of 8,196 purported pieces of equipment, only 66 actually existed, insolvency practitioners alleged.

The Serious Fraud Office announced an investigation into the affair in 2022. Yeowart's whereabouts are unknown. He has been made bankrupt. Hopkinson was found in France in 2023 but his whereabouts are unknown. He has also been bankrupted.

Sentinel's administrators are arguing that the bank was on notice because of the pattern of thousands of transactions and that it should have stopped the payments from at least 2012. They add that "it ought to have been apparent to Lloyds" that the payments "indicated or involved wrongdoing". Arena's liquidators have alleged Lloyds and its Bank of Scotland subsidiary processed payments "without authority".

They claimed there were "a number of facts and matters which would have caused a reasonably skilful and careful banker" to question whether transactions were "truly authorised".

Sentinel is asking Lloyds to "reconstitute" Sentinel's bank account with £1.1 billion, or alternatively £945 million, the sum Sentinel paid to Arena from May 2012, when it is claimed the bank had "reasonable grounds for believing" the payments were not legitimate. If the claimants are successful the litigation may force a rethink on how banks handle suspicious payment instructions, and the extent of banks' duties when corporate customers are defrauded.

Nick Oliver, director of the law firm Isadore Goldman which is working on the Sentinel claim, said: "The question at the heart of this case is whether Lloyds Bank should have spotted the warning signs, as more than a billion pounds of funds were channelled through one of its accounts.

"Allowing this case to proceed to full trial is a significant step, and will be an important test of UK banking laws."

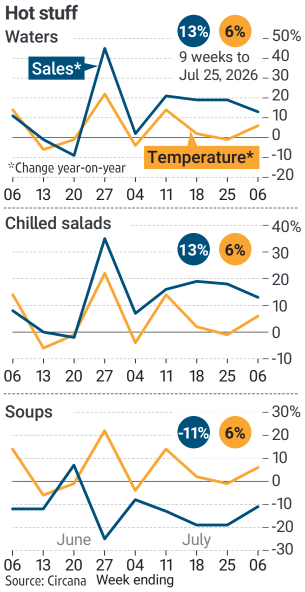
A trial is scheduled for October 2028

A spokeswoman for Lloyds said: "We are continuing to robustly defend the claims. We believe the claims wrongly seek to hold Lloyds liable for the financial consequences of a complex alleged fraud perpetrated against more than 50 lenders, including Lloyds."

the food in our shops?

DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

Milling Wheat being harvested in Petham, Kent, last week as drought gripped England and Wales, leading supermarket bosses to tell the prime minister food security was at risk. High demand for salad means less space for soup



Source: Circana

ranean-level" fridges capable of withstanding temperatures of up to 48 degrees Celsius.

The Co-op, which has introduced daily weather and refrigeration updates for its operation teams, is running certain beer and wine fridges at warmer than usual temperatures to preserve energy for vegetables and other fresh produce.

There has also been a rush to alleviate strain on distribution centres by reducing the number of stores they supply, among other measures. "When the heat hits Thurrock, it is intense — it's a really, really warm yard. Getting the wagons to temperature is an additional challenge, so you might want to ease the pressure by moving some of the stores over to Biggleswade," McCrae explained, referring to two of the Co-op's distribution sites in the east of England.

The pressures created by the heatwave have tested British supermarkets and food producers at a time of mounting global headwinds. In the UK, food inflation is expected to be 50 per cent higher by November than at the start of the cost of living crisis in mid-2021, fuelled by shortages of fertilisers and rising oil prices since the start of the Iran war. The World Bank has warned that a "super-El Niño" weather cycle this year could cause a severe global food price shock lasting into 2028.

Domestic food production in the UK has been declining for many years. Vegetables and fruits are down by about 16 per cent since 2015, according to industry estimates, meaning imports account for 78 per cent of supply.

This has left the UK increasingly "exposed" to the more frequent wildfires and heatwaves of mainland Europe, said Lauren O'Leary, ethical, sustainable and impact researcher at the investment fund Rathbones, which holds shares in several British supermarkets.

"The UK is a big food importer in areas which have been decimated by wildfires, such as Spain and France, where we import a lot of our fruit and veg," she said. "It's early to say what the repercussions are for the global supply chain around this, but I think it's safe to say that a lot [of the harvest] has been damaged."

Reservoirs and water supply are also a recurring theme. "You can't get away from the fact that the UK supply chain, in its broadest sense, needs to be more robust," said the former supermarket chief executive. "You have to build the reservoirs, you have to build the storage, you have to build the pipeworks to take water from the north to the south. The reality is, if you have sunshine and you have water it's like southern Spain. You'll be able to grow lots of stuff."

O'Leary said she expected investors to dial up the pressure on food companies to improve their green credentials and climate resilience after ESG dropped off the agenda in recent years.

"We do it through engagement, attending annual meetings and signing shareholder resolutions. And then, finally, it's disinvestment if we don't feel they have adequately addressed the issues. That's at the more extreme end of it."

She added: "When we've been talking to the retailers they've been saying that yes, extreme weather shocks are becoming more frequent. We only have to think about the El Niño happening now and the wider implications of the wildfires. I don't think it's just a one-off situation."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Ten-year saga nets £45 payouts

executives were infuriated by the decision to settle the Mastercard claim for vastly less than it had been valued, but a High Court judge rejected an attempted judicial review of the deal.

Merricks justified the settlement, arguing that "£40-odd million in private capital has been spent to recover £200 million from a huge international corporate that was found to have breached competition law".

"That is a return of nearly five times on what was invested. Most people would say that is a very good return."

Merricks said the claim was backed privately and no public funds were involved, apart from the court time.

He said a campaign this year would advertise the claim process. Those eligible must have been at least 16 and lived in England, Wales or Northern Ireland for at least three months between June 1997 and June 2008 — or from May 1992 for those living in Scotland. They must have bought goods or services from a company in the UK during that time and must have been living in the UK on September 6, 2016.

Canary Wharf cashes in on hybrid work backlash

Jessica Newman

Staff at Hargreaves Lansdown are being told to return to the office in the latest crackdown on hybrid working.

The retail investment broker, which is set to open offices in Bristol, has told employees that from next year they must come into the office at least three days a week. The plans were first reported by the Financial Times.

Hargreaves joins a growing chorus of large financial companies to roll out stricter return-to-office mandates, including JP Morgan, Revolut and TSB.

TSB, which was bought in a £2.65 billion deal by Santander earlier this year, has told its 5,000-strong workforce they will be required to work in an office for three days a week from April 2027. However, staff representatives at the TBU Union are preparing to take cases to the Employment Tribunal over concerns that some members will be unable to change their arrangements.

Revolut has told new graduate employees they will have to work from its offices. The fintech company has moved into a bigger base in Canary Wharf.

The list of companies pushing for a speedy shift back to office working has left businesses scrambling for prime office space in cities such as London.

Noel Quinn, HSBC's former chief executive, drove a move from a substantial space in Canary Wharf to a far smaller site in the City of London, only for the firm to reverse course.

The push is proving particularly beneficial for Canary Wharf Group, which has secured a wave of chunky lettings deals. PwC is inking a deal to rent 350,000 sq ft of space at One Eden, and Barclays has acquired a 999-year lease for its headquarters. JP Morgan Chase has plans for a skyscraper that will be one of the biggest offices in Europe.

Hargreaves declined to comment.

The week ahead

Britain's economic growth is expected to have slowed in the second quarter as a result of higher energy prices caused by the conflict between the US and Iran.

Official figures from the Office for National Statistics on Thursday are likely to show a deceleration in quarterly GDP growth after a strong 0.6 per cent expansion recorded between January and March. The Bank of England expects the economy to have grown by 0.3 per cent between April and June.

The economy has generally proved resilient in the face of those higher global energy prices, with inflation undershooting forecasts from the Bank and data on the labour market showing only small increases in the rate of unemployment.

As well as the ONS data covering the second quarter there will also be the latest month-on-month GDP estimate for June. Monthly growth was 0.1 per cent in May but could shrink by 0.1 per cent in June, Rob Wood, chief UK economist at Pantheon, a consultancy, said.

The Bank of England expects to see quarterly growth of 0.3 per cent

Despite the recent resilience, the Bank thinks growth will stall at 0 per cent in the third quarter.

"GDP growth partly reflects a continuation of weak momentum prior to the Middle East conflict, consistent with subdued household and business confidence," it said in its latest outlook.

TOMORROW

Little has changed since the boss of Bellway warned the housing market had become "increasingly challenging" since the outbreak of war in the Middle East and that demand for its new-build homes had "moderated".

Jason Honeyman, chief executive, said in June there had also been "renewed upward pressure on building material costs, resulting from the sudden jump in energy prices following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz".

The trading update should at least, however, show the company on track to deliver between 9,300 and 9,500 new homes and an underlying operating profit of between £320 million and £330 million in the year to the end of July.

Interims: Atalaya Mining, Genuit, InterContinental Hotels, International Workplace, Lion Finance, Spirax
Trading updates: Bellway, Public Policy Holding

WEDNESDAY

The interim report from Evoke could be one of the final times the gambling company issues results as a listed company. The debt-laden business behind William Hill recommended a £243 million takeover by the Greek lottery firm Bally's Intralot, right, in June, which could complete this year. The consensus among analysts is for the group to deliver revenues of £1.8 billion this year and adjusted pre-tax profits of £43 million.

Interims: Balfour Beatty, CLS Holdings, Evoke, Hill Smith
Trading update: Tui
Economy: IEA oil market report, US monthly inflation figures

THURSDAY

Investors in Rank Group are looking forward to annual results after an impressive update in July. The FTSE 250 company behind Mecca Bingo enjoyed strong growth within its digital business, with net gaming revenues up 12 per cent in the final quarter to £63.9 million, while sales from its Mecca venues rose 4 per cent. Rank has forecast operating profit for the 12 months to the end of June of at least £76 million.

Interims: Antofagasta, Costain, Entain, PensionBee, Savills, Secure Trust Bank
Finals: Rank Group
Economy: ONS first quarterly estimate of GDP

FRIDAY

One of the main points of interest in the half-year results from Aviva will be a strategic progress report on the integration of Direct Line into the business after completion of the £3.7 billion deal for the insurer in July last year.

The FTSE 100-listed group is still working through the merger of the two as it seeks to deliver cost savings of £225 million by the end of 2028.

Meanwhile, Amanda Blanc, Aviva chief executive, is moving ahead with efforts to expand the company's foothold in workplace pensions, in the hope of selling additional Aviva products to their newly acquired customers. City analysts forecast operating profit to rise by 17.5 per cent to £1.3 billion, up from £1.1 billion a year ago, led by a 40.5 per cent uplift in operating profit for its general insurance business, which now includes Direct Line.

Interims: Aviva, Winking Studios

JAMES BREEDEN FOR THE TIMES; ALAMY

The sunny weather and the World Cup gave pubs and restaurants a boost, the latest business trends survey released by BDO strongly suggests

A ray of sunshine for service sectors

Business activity returned to growth last month after warm weather and the World Cup gave Britain's hospitality and retail sectors a boost, according to a closely watched survey (Jessica Newman writes).

The latest business trends survey from BDO, the professional services group, found output rose above the 95 mark that indicates annual growth to a reading of 95.29 in July, up from 93.41 in June.

The research showed that the rebound was largely driven by the services sector, with hospitality businesses and retailers benefiting from the World Cup revelry and increased domestic tourism fuelling a rise in consumer spending.

BDO's report also pointed to an initial "Burnham bounce" last month after the appointment of the new prime minister contributed to a modest rebound in business optimism.

At 89.96, confidence among UK companies was up slightly from June's five-year low reading of 88.45 However, confidence remains well below the long-term growth threshold, indicating recovery is "unlikely to be sustained" without government support.

Scott Knight, head of growth at BDO, said that while a summer full of sun and sport did provide a much-needed economic boost, "sadly it can't last forever".

He argued that without greater clarity around the government's economic policies in the lead-up to October's budget, as well as a more stable geopolitical backdrop, any gain in confidence among businesses "is likely to be temporary, seasonal and short-lived".

Confidence in the manufacturing sector weakened in July as businesses continued to come under pressure from a sustained increase in production costs and supply chain uncertainty since the Iran war erupted five months ago. Confidence within the sector contracted to 91.83 last month, down from 94.53 in June.

The price of energy, raw materials and other inputs crucial to goods production has soared owing to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz since the initial US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. Last week the Bank of England warned that a prolonged Middle East conflict that keeps oil and gas prices higher for longer could trigger interest rate rises. Inflation is on track to stay above 3 per cent for the rest of the year, the bank predicted, meaning it will not have hit its 2 per cent target for two years. BDO's research indicated that hiring appetite remained close to a 15-year low. An index that measures hiring intentions, headcount and labour demand by BDO held steady at 93.08, the first time since May in which it has not declined. The consultancy believes this offers hope that labour market stabilisation is on the horizon.

Global investors to seek safety in gilts

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

UK government bonds are set to benefit from volatile asset moves in the United States and Japan, giving a boost to Andy Burnham's new government before the autumn budget.

Analysts and investors said they expected gilt yields to fall over the remainder of the year, as the UK's inflation outlook supports the chances of interest rate cuts.

Concerns about the credibility of Kevin Warsh, the new chairman of the US Federal Reserve, and a more expansionary fiscal environment in Japan are other factors that could lead investors to choose gilts over other assets.

Daniel von Ahlen, a strategist at TS Lombard, said that bond investors should "double down on gilts" in the coming months, and that UK bond prices would rise relative to peers in Japan, the US and Germany.

Markets are expecting the Bank of England to raise interest rates twice over the next year, but Von Ahlen said there was a higher likelihood that borrowing costs would be cut "as the labour market remains in the doldrums".

Falling gilt yields before the budget on October 28 can help buy fiscal breathing room for John Healey, the chancellor. The rise in gilt yields since the end of February, when the US-Iran war broke out, has wiped about £10-£12 billion from the government's headroom to meet its fiscal rules.

A 1 percentage point increase in the ten-year gilt yield adds £12-15 billion to the government debt interest bill.

Gilts were one of the worst-performing bonds this year, because the UK economy is the most severely exposed to the energy price shock caused by the Middle East conflict. But the past three inflation readings have undershot the Bank of England's estimates, suggesting that the spillover from higher oil prices into the rest of the economy has been limited.

£12-15bn

Amount by which a 1 percentage point increase in the ten-year gilt yield adds to the government debt interest bill

In July, gilts outperformed peers: total monthly returns on UK bonds were flat compared with a fall of 1.2 per cent for US treasuries and a 0.7 per cent decline for German bonds, according to Deutsche Bank.

Mark Dowding, chief investment officer at RBC BlueBay Asset Management, who has had a pessimistic view of gilts this year, said he was no more "constructive on the near-term outlook" for UK government debt after the Bank of England's latest meeting.

"The doveish bias of the monetary policy committee may encourage investors to add exposure [to gilts]," Dowding said.

Analysts at BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, said they had a "neutral" position on gilts, compared with underweight, or reduced, exposure to Japanese government debt and long-term US government bonds.

Japanese government bonds have been the worst-performing significant debt class this year as the world's third-largest economy prepares to raise interest rates from record lows and a new government maintains expansionary fiscal policy through tax cuts and investment spending. On July 31, the US intervened to support Japan's currency and warned that the sell-off could spill over into US treasuries.

UK borrowing costs could fall further this year as the Bank of England is expected to reduce the pace at which it sells gilts on its balance sheet back to investors. Bank of America analysts said the Bank would reduce its annual pace of "quantitative tightening" from £70 billion to £50 billion from next month.

Hackers have hit a third of UK manufacturers this year

Chris Dorrell
Technology Business Correspondent

Nearly one in three manufacturers have been affected by cyberattacks in the past year, new research shows.

The findings highlight the growing importance of cyber-resilience in the manufacturing sector as businesses increasingly rely on connected machinery, robotics and remote access tools.

The incidents included those that directly affected a manufacturer and those that hit a supplier. The consequences from the cyberattacks included production downtime and increased operational costs, the research from Make UK showed. For those companies affected by an attack on a supplier, 31 per cent reported delays to customer deliveries, and the same share reported reduced capacity.

Nina Gryf, innovation and digitalisation lead at Make UK, the trade body for manufacturers, said cyberattacks were "no longer abstract technical events" for manufacturers.

"They are showing up on the factory floor through downtime, higher costs, delayed orders and pressure on supply chains. In a connected industrial economy, a digital weakness can quickly become a production problem," she said.

Gryf said cyber-resilience needed to be treated as part of basic business resilience. "The businesses that get this right will be better placed to keep production moving, protect customers and invest in digital technologies with confidence," she said.

Cyber-risks have rapidly risen up the boardroom agenda after a series of high-profile attacks. Jaguar Land Rover was one of the best known corporate hacking victims last year. Its factories around the world were shut for the whole of September after an attack on its IT systems, costing the economy an estimated £2 billion.

In 2025, both Marks & Spencer and the Co-op were targeted. Research commissioned by the government suggests that the annual cost of significant cyberattacks to UK organisations is about £14.7 billion.

The rise of artificial intelligence is expected to lead to increasingly frequent and sophisticated cyberattacks. Anthropic said that its Mythos tool was able to find thousands of previously undiscovered vulnerabilities across some of the world's most important software when it was tested in April.

Ministers have been pressing Britain's biggest businesses to boost their defences. Baroness Lloyd of Effra, the cybersecurity minister, wrote to almost 200 business leaders this year, urging them to embrace a new "cyber-resilience pledge" to shore up their security.

Jonathon Ellison, director of national resilience at the National Cyber Security Centre, said: "No manufacturer can afford to treat cybersecurity as anything other than a business-critical priority."

Simon French

As the world shifts against free trade, the Buy British campaign isn't as daft as it looks

BETTMANN ARCHIVE

There is nothing new about prime ministers launching Buy British campaigns

The big reveal on the new UK government's economics will have to wait for the budget on October 28. However, over the past three weeks, one defining characteristic of Labour's new administration has emerged — a more explicit national interest approach to procurement and the government's industrial strategy.

The new chancellor, John Healey, spoke last week of making it a "leading priority to back British, not just if possible but by design, so that procurement supports British jobs, British apprenticeships and British innovation". These weren't throwaway remarks. This was a clear message to public sector leaders on how he expects them to use the spending power of the state.

This is of course nothing new. Britain's leaders, from Ramsay MacDonald in the 1930s to Harold Wilson in the 1970s, Gordon Brown in the late 2000s and now the government led by Andy Burnham, have channelled various versions of "Buy British". All these leaders faced tenure-defining economic challenges and found solace in fusing nationalism with commerce. The narrow economics of this approach remain undimmed — a damaging disruption of the benefits of comparative advantage, and trade. But is it possible that global politics has changed to such a degree that this trumps (pun intended) the economics?

One of the failings of economic theory can be when it defines the market failure in overly narrow terms. And narrowly defined, a renewed Buy British campaign is folly. Cheaper or higher quality products provided by the UK's trading partners risk being rejected in favour of inferior domestic alternatives. Frictions to trade mean that in any given transaction the buyer ends up with "less bang for their buck", or perhaps better defined in a UK context as "less quality for their quid".

So is this case closed? The UK government is on the wrong track and have set the conditions for stretched public sector procurement budgets to be spent even less efficiently? Not so fast.

A wider definition of the economic problem the UK government faces is that the backdrop to global trade has decisively shifted in recent years. China has curbed imports as its surging exports move up the value chain, most visibly in electric vehicles and frontier AI. The US has taken a mercantilist shift that will outlast President Trump, and the UK's trading relationship with the European Union has irrevocably altered since Brexit. This is hardly a favourable backdrop for unfettered free and fair trade.

Active industrial strategies with explicit national interest objectives are characteristics of the world's three largest economies. As Canada's prime minister, and former Bank of England governor, Mark Carney, wryly observed at Davos this year the middle powers "must act together because if we're not at the table, we're on the menu". He went on to note that middle power countries like Canada and the UK "must develop greater strategic autonomy, in energy, food, critical minerals, in finance and supply chains".

Greater strategic autonomy is Davos-speak for not being reliant on less reliable trading partners for essential and critical goods and services, even if such an approach would lead to overall losses in economic efficiency. Carney — who for a long time was a poster child for unfettered globalisation — has recognised and defined the change. Burnham and Healey are simply channelling the same justification. It would be easy to take a swipe at the UK government for not pushing back and being a free trade counterweight, but the judgment in Whitehall — or perhaps in Heron House, the site of No 10 North — must be that the UK is insufficiently relevant across enough industries for such unilateralism to be effective.

There is another aspect to this focus on sovereign economics. The global economy is going through a period of extraordinary technological change in which nascent industries across the low-carbon economy and AI spheres receive extraordinary levels of public and private investment. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt), have always had provisions to allow developing economies to support infant industry capacity. Article XVIII of Gatt provides something of a theoretical safety blanket in a world where the US and China pay scant regard to the utterances of the WTO.

For the UK, from a legal standpoint Article XIX — designed to avoid dumping of subsidised imports — provides the basis for intervention.

You can already see evidence that this legal framework is influencing the language used by the new government. It was noticeable that ministers talked of UK jobs and UK impact, not an explicit favouring of UK firms. To date the ownership question, apart from in refence to Chinese ownership of British Steel, has been the dog that hasn't barked.

The newly restored business secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, speaks about the right ecosystem for firms to "scale and stay in the UK". Labour has prioritised voluntary pension fund allocations, including the new Scale-up Fund co-ordinated by the British Business Bank, Sovereign AI fund, and balance sheets of the National Wealth Fund, UK Export Finance, National Housing Bank to backstop UK investment. Despite these efforts UK assets continue to fall into foreign hands at a rapid pace. It can be confidently predicted that when the corporation tax and capital gains implications of these moves become apparent the calls for more intervention will grow.

And this speaks to the route out of what looks increasingly like a costly protectionist cycle. If this is a way to bear down on costly energy, labour, land and capital that have hampered competitiveness then it can be seen as a means to an end for middle-power countries, including the UK, that got high on their "luxury beliefs" during a period of low interest rates and favourable demographics. If, however, it is used to plaster over these failings, and allow them to endure, then it will be a costly mistake where taxpayers will again pick up the tab. When Burnham lays out his ten-year vision in the autumn, financial markets will be watching for clues on which of these paths he will take.

Simon French is managing director, head of research and chief economist at Panmure Liberum

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Pragmatic seeks funds to scale up production

Chris Dorrell

A British semiconductor company with hopes of becoming one of the largest in the world is under pressure to raise funding as it tries to scale up production.

Companies House filings show that Pragmatic Semiconductor's cash reserves will fund operations only until March, by which point it must raise fresh capital. As a result, the directors warned of a "material uncertainty" over the company's future.

JP Morgan has been appointed to lead a Series E funding round. The company is understood to be seeking about £150 million.

"For technology companies in the scale-up stage, like Pragmatic, funding rounds are typically held every two to three years, making the 2026 raise a planned and expected step in the company's growth trajectory," the directors wrote in the company's accounts.

They acknowledged there was "no certainty the funding will be received, although ... they have no reasonable expectation it will not be able to do so."

The company secured a £36 million bridging loan from its existing investors in the form of convertible loan notes during the first half of this year.

The filings showed that Pragmatic's operating loss widened to £65 million from £55 million the year before, largely because of higher administrative costs. Revenue nearly halved to £901,000 from £1.7 million last year due to lower income from its FlexIC Foundry service, through which the company takes bespoke chip designs from customers.

David Moore, who became the company's chief executive in 2023, said in June that Pragmatic would generate "significant revenues" for the first time this year.

The company estimates that its total addressable market once it has scaled up production is around $30 billion. "Our goal is to be one of the largest semiconductor companies in the world," Moore has said.

Founded in 2010, Pragmatic designs and manufactures ultra-thin and physically flexible microchips that can be deployed to track individual items as they pass through supply chains, as well as to convey information to consumers.

The company has faced hold-ups bringing its technology to mass production. The directors acknowledged "delays" but recognised the "deep complexity of developing an entirely new disruptive technology".

Pragmatic declined to comment.

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Berkshire lifts stock holdings in change of tack under Abel

Chris Dorrell

Berkshire Hathaway bought nearly $20 billion more in shares than it sold in the second quarter, as its new chief executive, Greg Abel, put the company's enormous cash reserves into action.

The investments reverse a period of more than three years in which Warren Buffett trimmed the conglomerate's stock holdings, signalling a new approach for the company. The investments included buying $10 billion of additional stock in Alphabet, the owner of Google, making the company one of Berkshire's top five holdings.

The company, based in Omaha, Nebraska, also spent about $4.5 billion buying back its own shares, a sharp acceleration from the $235 million spent on buybacks in the first quarter.

Abel succeeded Buffett as chief executive at the start of this year. Investors have been eager to see how his investment strategy will differ from the one pursued by Buffett, who remains the chairman. Berkshire's cash pile fell from a record $397.4 billion at the end of March to $365.5 billion at the end of June, its latest quarterly results show.

Buffett, known as the sage of Omaha, garnered fame for his patient and prudent approach to investing. Since he took control in 1965, Berkshire has averaged annual returns of 19.8 per cent, making it one of the world's most closely followed firms.

However, in the past few years Buffett struggled to find value in equity markets which have risen precipitously. Last month he told CNBC that "it's tough to find values when everybody is preferring gambling".

Buffett, who will turn 96 this month, has said that he "initiated" the Alphabet investment after consulting Abel. Berkshire already had a large stake in the company after Buffett started buying its stock in 2025. He admitted Berkshire should have backed Alphabet sooner.

Buffett has said that he and Abel work together closely. "I am not doing anything that he doesn't approve of. He's not doing anything I don't approve of," he said last month. "We talk all the time, but he is the decider."

Macrae Sykes, a portfolio manager at Gabelli Funds, said: "Warren and Greg are terrific investors, and their repurchasing shares gives me confidence in the present value of Berkshire's shares and growth of intrinsic value going forward." Berkshire is its largest holding.

Alongside its investments in companies such as Alphabet, Berkshire owns a variety of businesses. Its wider earnings are often seen as a good gauge on the US economy because its subsidiaries operate in many sectors.

The latest investments were published in the company's second-quarter results at the weekend. Berkshire's operating earnings rose 16 per cent year-on-year to $1 billion in the three months to the end of June, ahead of analyst expectations.

Revenue at BNSF, one of America's largest railroad businesses, increased 15 per cent as the company shipped more consumer, agricultural and energy products. Sales at Berkshire's electronic parts division, TTI, rose more than 26 per cent as demand was boosted by the build-out of artificial intelligence infrastructure.

Its relatively underweight position on technology stocks means it has underperformed the market this year, its shares rising only 3.3 per cent. The company warned of "considerable uncertainty" in the macro environment because of conflicts and tariffs.

Mark Neale, far right, founded the

Burnham under pressure

Andy Burnham is facing mounting pressure over North Sea oil and gas as a decision on allowing new drilling moves closer.

A consultation on Jackdaw, a gas field 150 miles east of Aberdeen, will close today, while a consultation on the Rosebank oil field, northwest of Shetland, closes in a week's time.

The oil and gas industry, opposition politicians and President Trump have called for Burnham to grant permission for the projects, arguing this would protect jobs and cut household bills.

However, environmental groups have urged the prime minister to refuse permission for production as part of the fight against climate change.

Production at Jackdaw and Rosebank was approved by the Conservatives, but a court quashed those decisions last year after a challenge from Greenpeace, leaving the Labour government to decide whether to go ahead.

The end of the consultations has brought renewed focus on the prime minister's decision.

Trump has also been a vocal supporter of North Sea drilling, and said Burnham "sounded terrific" on the issue in their first phone call last month. In that call, Burnham told Trump the UK "can't ignore" resources in the North Sea, and said he would take "a pragmatic approach" to further drilling.

A protest by Just Stop Oil against drilling at Rosebank

Last month BP announced it wanted to sell its North Sea oil business. Meg O'Neill, the chief executive, said the North Sea was simply not "competitive" with other parts of the world and that even cutting the high oil and gas taxes in the UK would not change BP's mind about selling.

The prime minister could face an internal battle if he does approve pro-

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MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE

retailer that sells waterproofs, walking boots and camping gear from 434 stores around the world

Mountain Warehouse founder steps down from retailer's peak

The founder of Mountain Warehouse is stepping aside as chief executive after almost 30 years, just as the outdoor retailer passes £500 million in annual revenue (Isabella Fish writes).

Mark Neale, who has been chief executive since launching the retailer in 1997, will hand over the role to Marcus Ward from September 1. Ward has been part of the business for almost 20 years, having joined as finance director before taking on various other roles and becoming chief operating and financial officer in 2018.

Neale told The Times that he wanted to focus on expanding the international business, as well as Animal, the Dorset-based surf-inspired brand it acquired from H Young Holdings in 2021. He will remain as executive chairman.

The Mountain Warehouse boss noted he was "one of the few serving chiefs executives who has been in post for longer than Simon Wolfson," the boss of Next for the past 25 years. "I'm still too young to retire," he added.

Neale founded the no-frills retailer almost three decades ago, selling waterproofs, ski jackets, walking boots and camping gear. It now employs more than 4,400 people across 434 stores worldwide.

Last year, Neale and three senior executives purchased Inflexion's near-20 per cent stake in the British outdoor retailer, with backing from the group's lenders NatWest, HSBC UK and RBC Capital Markets, as well as Citi and Lloyds. Neale said he had no plans to get internal buyers back in the business.

According to its latest filings, turnover rose 13.4 per cent to £509.2 million in the year to February 22, taking the company past the £500 million mark for the first time. The company is targeting revenue of £1 billion. Operating profit increased by £13.9 million to £47.6 million.

As part of the leadership shake-up, Marsha Smith will join the company as global retail director on September 14 to help lead its international expansion. She has held senior leadership roles with Ikea and Marks & Spencer.

Mountain Warehouse is one of the few retail companies continuing to open stores. It has plans to open 60 shops in this financial year across the UK, US, New Zealand, Canada and Australia.

"This whole narrative that everybody was going to shop online after the pandemic just didn't come true. Shops came back very strongly and are continuing that way, both in the UK and elsewhere," Neale said."

Apple tests Chinese chips as worldwide shortage bites

Apple has been testing memory chips from China in product lines including iPhones and MacBooks, to mitigate the AI boom-fuelled component shortage.

Apple held early talks with CXMT, which is China's largest chipmaker by market value, about supplying components with the goal of using them in some devices sold in the country, the Wall Street Journal has reported.

The laptop makers HP and Acer are also reported to have started using CXMT memory chips in devices sold outside the US to ease shortages.

It is considering building a second memory-chip plant in Beijing to boost production and meet demand, Reuters has reported.

The chipmaker became China's most valuable company after soaring 466 per cent on its market debut.

Shares jumped from a float price of 8.66 yuan a share, valuing the company at $85.5 billion, to 49 yuan a share, giving it a market capitalisation of nearly $500 billion and putting it ahead of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) as China's most valuable company.

CXMT is a core part of Beijing's drive to build a self-sufficient chip industry. China's government, which held 36.3 per cent of CXMT before the float, is increasingly counting on home-grown hardware to boost its position in the AI race against the United States, which has restricted China's access to advanced chips.

CXMT is the world's fourth-largest maker of dynamic random-access memory (Dram) memory chips, with about an 8 per cent market share. It wants to rival South Korea's Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, and the US giant Micron, whose profits and share prices rose in recent months, boosted by the push to build data centres that power artificial intelligence.

Kyle Chan, an analyst of the Chinese tech industry at the Brookings Institution, a think tank, said: "CXMT's rapid ascent epitomises China's broader rise as a high-tech powerhouse. Originally aimed at tech self-reliance, China's chip champions will eventually start to compete with industry leaders in global markets."

over oilfields

duction at Jackdaw and Rosebank. Some within Labour back the move. Graeme Downie, an MP in Scotland, said the UK should "manage the decline of the North Sea in a way that protects workers, supports communities and builds the industries that will power Britain's future".

He added: "If we do not proceed with Jackdaw and Rosebank, investment will leave the UK, jobs will disappear and expertise will be lost."

Others have pointed to Labour's manifesto commitment not to grant new licences for drilling in the North Sea. Labour has always said it would honour existing licences, giving it some room to approve production.

A government spokesman said: "The North Sea remains a vital national asset, supporting jobs, growth and the UK's energy security. We are clear that oil and gas will continue to play an important role in our energy system for decades to come, alongside renewables, nuclear and other low-carbon technologies."

Atlassian urges companies to rein in AI spending

Chris Dorrell

Businesses need to gain greater control over their spending on artificial intelligence, according to the chief executive of a leading software company.

Mike Cannon-Brookes, the founder and chief executive of the Australian software-maker Atlassian, said the costs associated with AI had come into "much sharper focus in the last three to six months".

He said: "When you're spending a million dollars, maybe you care a lot less as a big business. Once you're spending $100 million, you start focusing on the cost. When you're spending a billion dollars, you're going to think very carefully about the cost."

His comments reflect growing concern over rising "token" consumption. Tokens refer to the basic units of text a large language model reads and writes. The more intensive a company's AI usage, the more tokens it consumes, and the higher the cost.

Mike Cannon-Brookes said the costs of AI had come into sharper focus

Many businesses encouraged their employees to "tokenmax", but executives are increasingly conscious of the cost. Data from AlphaSense, a market intelligence company, shows that the word "tokens" appeared in 129 earnings calls across US businesses in the second quarter, up from 57 in the first quarter.

Token usage is still expected to rise, reflecting the increase of autonomous AI agents that run tasks in the background, and more sophisticated models. But companies will want clearer returns on their investments.

Cannon-Brookes argued that Atlassian's tools, which help to manage workflows across an organisation, could feed AI agents with much more relevant company context. "Every time an AI model reads a word or writes a word, you're paying money. The better answers we can give the agent, the less words it needs to read," he said.

Atlassian was badly hit by the sell-off in software stocks, which was driven by fears AI would disrupt the software industry. The company had to lay off 10 per cent of its global workforce in March, but the company's latest results, released on Thursday, showed that AI could yet prove a tailwind for the business.

Revenue jumped 28 per cent, year on year, to $1.8 billion, above expectations. Adoption of the company's AI products also impressed investors. Its shares gained over 30 per cent on Friday, helping to wipe out nearly all the losses this year. Cannon-Brookes himself said he would spend $250 million buying shares in the company.

In particular, Atlassian argued that its Teamwork Graph, the underlying data intelligence layer on which the company's other tools run, helped AI agents to give 44 per cent more accurate answers while consuming 48 per cent fewer tokens.

Cannon-Brookes argued that software companies were a crucial intermediary for businesses adopting AI, whether that was through providing relevant context to agents or directing queries to the most cost-effective model.

"A lot of problems don't need the amount of power the latest models have. It's like hiring an Oxford mathematics professor to solve your kids' homework," Cannon-Brooks said.

"We take the costs, and we manage them, and we provide customers with an application," he said. "In terms of AI, managing all those costs ourselves [for the customers] is a large part of our job."

Bra fittings in the office are latest perk at work

THE TIMES
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A fashion executive who founded her own lingerie label has found a receptive audience, **Niamh Curran** writes

If you ask any woman about her first bra fitting, the chances are she will tell you a horror story about a harshly lit M&S changing room, a middle-aged woman with a measuring tape and how she's not been back for another one since.

The bad memories associated with the process puts a lot of women off asking for help in finding the correct size and style. But now one company is offering a solution to the problem by having a fitter visit your place of work. Peachaus, a London-based lingerie company, started offering in-office bra fittings as an employee benefit last year and has already landed clients including Expedia, Michael Page and Reward Gateway.

Always on trend, the Times Entrepreneurs Network invited it into our office in London to see what it does. Your reporter was fairly apprehensive, not least because she had the impression some of her colleagues thought the whole idea was inappropriate.

However, Gillian Ridley Whittle, the founder of Peachaus, and her team managed to transform a small well-lit conference room into a relaxing bra-fitting experience. The glass walls were covered with floral-patterned folding screens for privacy; additional partitions were used in the corners of the room to create private spaces for fittings.

The first ever Peachaus Bra fitting took place in a London WeWork office. Before setting up the room, Ridley Whittle was told by staff at the company that hired her not to use the word "bra" in any of its signage, because "it might offend someone".

Despite this hiccup, the session proved to be a success. Ridley Whittle was "inundated" with employees wanting a bra fitting, she said.

Back at The Times, lacy underwear hung on golden rails in a room that was to be used for an editorial planning meeting two hours later. Ridley Whittle's assistants were dressed in the company's pyjamas, which it also sells. The room smelt of lavender, from a spray.

"From the moment you walk in the room, we want to make you feel safe — psychologically, physically safe — that's really important," Ridley Whittle said. Each fitting session starts with the client being asked how her previous one went. Most of the time, women share accounts of ill-fitting bras. One employee at the accountancy software firm Xero said she was always left with bras that were too tight and uncomfortable for sitting at a desk all day.

The next step is a "health check" for the client's current bra. I discovered that mine was simultaneously too big and too small, with fabric sitting away from my body and leaving red marks. Ridley Whittle then visually assessed my size. Peachaus does not use a measuring tape, instead relying on hand and visual measurements, although the fitter did place her hands on my sides to confirm she was correct.

Ridley Whittle uses 20 freelance bra fitters based in Bristol, London and Manchester. They are "hand-selected for empathy and how they connect with others" and trained using a manual she wrote. It offers advice on tone of voice and phrasing, to make women feel at ease.

The price for a bra ranges between £30 and £60. I was given two options to try on, and although I had not worn this style in over ten years, I left with an underwire bra that has now become a staple item in my wardrobe.

Each fitting is finished with measurements written down and a card with a QR code for the cancer charity CoppaFeel!, with links on how to examine your own breasts. Peachaus donates £1 to the charity for every bra sold.

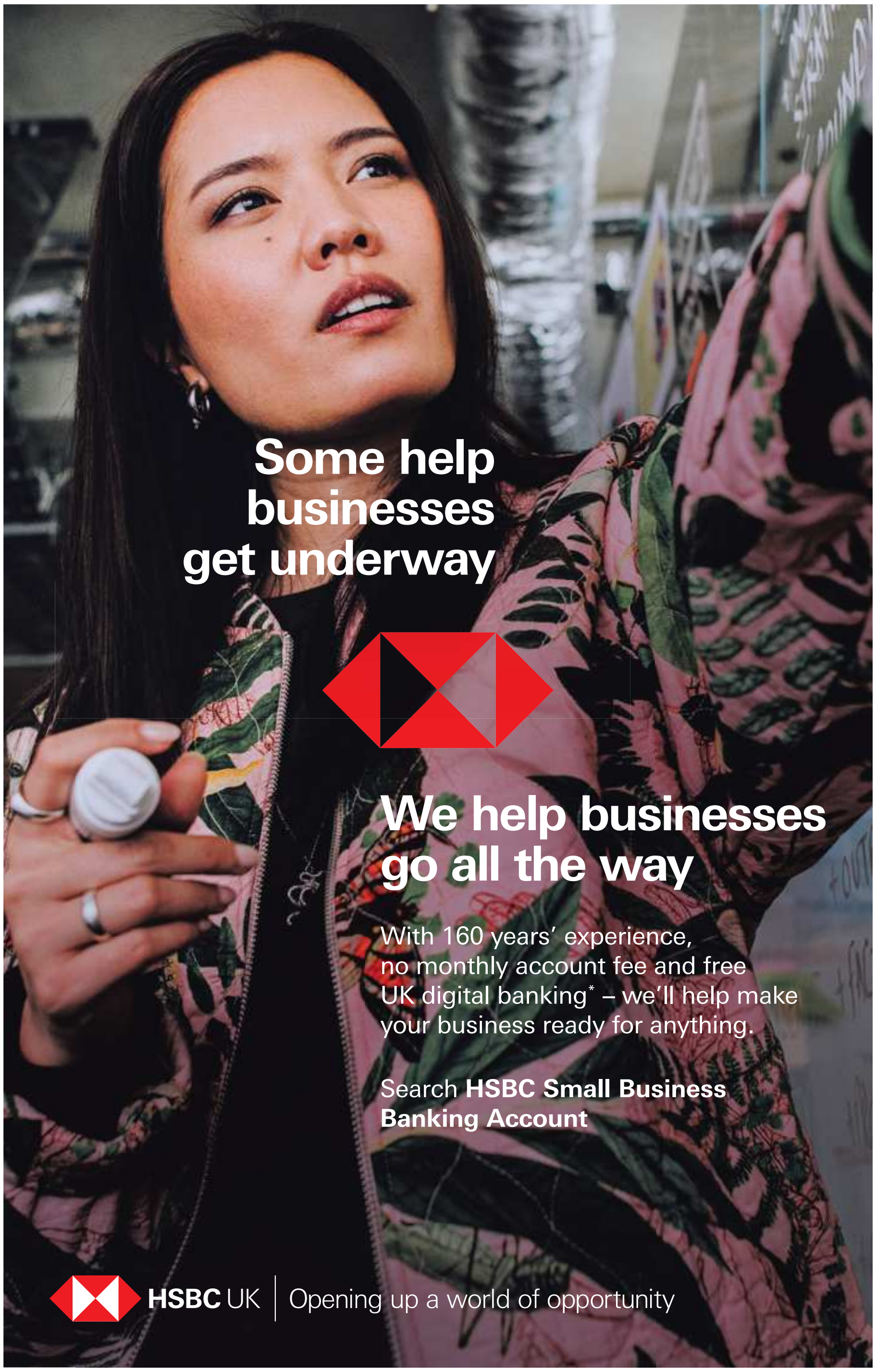
Peachaus makes money from sales of bras and underwear, but also by charging the companies £35 to £39 per employee, depending on the package offered. Staff receive a 10 per cent discount on all the products they purchase during a session.

However, fittings were not always their business model. Ridley Whittle founded the company in 2022, initially to sell sustainable underwear and loungewear online. She started in fashion 30 years ago, joining the graduate programme at Marks Spencer, working her way up to become head of buying for Debenhams.

After having her first child, she returned to Marks Spencer to head up the lingerie department, where she first "fell in love with underwear" because of the "fabric and the lace". Helping to introduce the popular Rosie Huntington-Whiteley range, she continued in the department for nearly ten years, before being headhunted to work for Target in Australia in 2014.

In Australia, Ridley Whittle worked

Gillian Ridley Whittle says Peachaus



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LUCY YOUNG FOR THE TIMES

uses 20 freelance bra fitters for its in-office service, hand-selected for empathy and how they connect with others

long hours and "hit a bit of a wall". Concerned about the industry's environmental impact, she began to develop a sustainable underwear brand that put "care and comfort at the forefront of everything", but shelved the idea when she was offered a job at Topshop back in the UK, serving as fashion director for the brand before its parent company, Arcadia, went under in 2020. Ridley Whittle worked for Asos, Topshop's new owner, until she was made redundant in 2021, and in her spare time worked on the business plan and investor deck for Peachaus.

She was originally going to call her brand Beach House, to evoke a relaxed Australian atmosphere, but decided to change it to Peachaus because it was "tactile, feminine, soft".

Her first investor, Cedric Wilmotte, the former chief executive of Michael Kors and interim chief operating officer at Versace, invested six months after she was made redundant. The brand has gone on to receive nearly £2 million in investment.

The company sold only through ecommerce, then moved into wholesale but did not receive much traction. Deciding it needed to "meet women where they are", it opened a pop-up shop in Covent Garden in March 2024. The pop-up was a success, which helped the brand develop its in-person bra fitting service.

Later that year, Peachaus booked a small tent at the Verve Wellness Festival, in Dorset. "I really thought no one was going to take their clothes off and want a bra [fitting], but we were inundated," Ridley Whittle said. "We had women trying bras on top of their yoga tops, we had women stripping off behind very primitive screens … I thought, 'if women are willing to take their clothes off in the middle of a field, they are going to take them off in an office'."

A friend helped her connect with WeWork for the first in-office bra-fitting session. Through word of mouth, Peachaus then expanded. Ridley Whittle has set the goal of fitting bras on one million women by 2030 and views a proper bra fitting as a health issue, one employers should provide as they might an eye or dental check.

Competitions are the best way to boost British start-ups, Thunderer, page 18

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We should make better use of UK business leaders

Steve Rigby

It is tempting to equate running a big business with running the country, but really there is no comparison. Two dozen departments. Briefings you cannot repeat at dinner. A fiscal straitjacket buckled by your predecessors. A weekly kicking at the dispatch box, with every word scrutinised in real time. Nobody drifts into the job of prime minister. They fight their way in.

Then there is the cabinet. In business, a board shares a profit motive, a chairperson and a set of numbers. A cabinet shares none of that. Real power sits out in the departments, and the people around the table are frequently rivals with ambitions of their own. Imagine running a company where your finance director is quietly campaigning for your role. It has happened, but not often.

Politics and business are distinct disciplines, but that does not mean we cannot learn from each other. As I have become more politically engaged over recent years, I have taken plenty of ideas back to my business life. Equally, politicians must be open to the positive influence of business.

> Whitehall is not short of clever people. It is short of people who've built businesses

Much has been said about the shortage of business experience in the Andy Burnham administration. Of the full cabinet members, none have held senior corporate positions and none have run their own company.

This matters more than the critics realise because economic growth is the only route out of our current bind. It is the foundation on which policy goals are achieved and lives are transformed. Tapping into the skills and knowledge of our most talented business leaders is a significant part of achieving this growth mission, but the recent record is not encouraging.

Poppy Gustafsson could not cut through as investment minister. Jason Stockwood, a man of real capability, was gone before he had a chance to prove himself. James Timpson managed two years as prisons minister, one of the longer periods in government for a high-profile business figure. It came at a cost to his father, Sir John, a wonderful man in his eighties, who stepped back into the breach at the family firm. Patrick Vallance, formerly a senior executive at GlaxoSmithKline, was a popular and effective science minister but recently left the government.

Something is not working. Inevitably, there is a culture clash. Government and business are different animals and anyone who pretends otherwise has done neither. But the business leaders I know who have served in government do not go in with their eyes closed, even if some naivety is to be expected.

A common problem is the pace of decision-making and action. Many of the issues facing the country today will not wait, with artificial intelligence the prime example. We are moving too slowly — and slowness in this race is a price we will pay for a generation. Failure to act is something no one who has run a big business will accept.

The issue here is not why so few business leaders choose to enter government — that will always be a relatively small number — but why their tenures are so short. Politics is brutal and the scrutiny is intense: we all know that. But the relentless pace of criticism can come as a shock to even the most accomplished entrepreneur or chief executive. No job in this country is harder than governing it.

I am sometimes asked whether I would serve. The honest answer is that the price is too high. Doing so would mean accepting a post with no fixed term while leaving my business behind. Upon arriving, having spent years responsible for thousands of people, the shock of suddenly having a tiny team and no formal reports would be enormous.

The reality is that recruiting business people into full-time, junior ministerial roles is a hard ask and will remain one.

But there is a model that works and it is already running. The serial tech founder Alex Depledge was appointed entrepreneurship adviser to the Treasury for two days a week. She has kept her outside interests intact and is able to speak her mind when asked a difficult question. Alex has made a genuine difference and I hope she will continue to do so under the new government. Those of us who engage with her respect both the woman and the method, including when the answer is "no".

That is the template: not a handful of appointments that flame out inside 18 months, but a standing cadre of serious operators giving one or two days a week to the departments that need them most. It costs the taxpayer almost nothing. The upside is enormous.

Now is a good time to recruit. The return of Jonathan Reynolds to the business department is welcomed by those of us who deal with it and John Healey's steady hand as chancellor is reassuring on the fiscal front.

Whitehall is not short of clever people. It is short of people who have built businesses and can, therefore, provide complementary talents and a different perspective on the economy. Bringing that experience in is the cheapest win available to this government.

Steve Rigby is chief executive of Rigby Group and chair of Family Business UK

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
357.39	Aston Martin Lag	35¼	+ ¼	...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
4,649.72	**Aberdeen Group**	252⅝	+ 12	5.8	11.7
2.08	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.4
11,903.00	**Admiral**	3886	+ 114	3.7	15.8
2,406.28	AJ Bell	610½	+ 23	2.4	23.8
56,445.10	AON Corp‡	26609¼	– 438¾	0.9	...
138.00	Arbuthnot♦	832½	– 7½	6.6	7.6
1,600.82	Ashmore Group	224⅝	+ 18¼	7.5	18.5
59,562.30	Australia & NZ	1974⅞	+ 27¾	5.8	19.4
21,388.30	**Aviva**	712⅝	+ 19¼	5.5	26.5
160,995.00	Banco Santander	1096	+ 46	1.5	14.1
69,650.50	**Barclays‡**	516	+ 7¼	2.2	11.8
2.17	Blue Star Capital♦	4¼	– ¼	...	-2.2
242.55	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	676		5.4	5.1
3,015.51	Bridgepoint Grp	342	+ 21⅜	2.8	68.4
787.81	Chesnara	340	– 4	6.6	-67.3
249.34	City of London Grp	492	+ 16	6.7	16.5
652.90	Close Bros	433¼	+ 7⅝	...	-6.5
1,930.73	CMC Markets‡	690	+ 23	2.0	25.1
53,817.60	Deutsche Bank	2816⅞	+ 92⅞	3.0	10.4
1,064.53	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74⅛	– ⅛	0.9	...
51.68	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
7.99	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
87.74	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
1,487.81	Georgia Capital	4400	+ 445	...	2.7
71.53	Hansard Global	52	+ 1	8.6	40.0
155.62	Helios U/W♦	223		4.5	7.7
5,858.14	**Hiscox**	1829	+ 20	2.1	13.7
262,771.00	**HSBC**	1529¼	– 46¾	3.6	17.0
4,463.27	**IG Group**	1343	– 117	3.2	9.3
143.30	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	112¾	+ 3¼	8.9	7.1
5,672.15	**ICG**	2042	+ 154	4.3	12.2
2,567.17	Intl Public P'ship	143⅜	+ 1⅜	6.1	-12.9
4,688.12	**Investec**	673½	+ 24½	5.7	8.7
10.13	Investment Co	75		...	...
621.93	IP Group	70⅜	+ 8⅛	1.8	9.7
3.58	Jarvis Securities♦	8		43.8	2.5
837.25	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	161⅝	+ 3⅝	3.7	8.4
1,457.96	Lancashire Hldgs‡	597½	– 5	2.8	6.7
17,488.50	**Legal & General**	316⅜	+ 16	6.9	31.7
5,359.90	**Lion Finance Group**	12440	+ 830	3.0	8.7
192.06	Liontrust Asset Mgmt‡	305	+ 21	6.2	19.8
61.84	Livermore Invs Grp♦	37⅜	+ ¾	8.4	16.8
66,955.10	**Lloyds Banking‡**	115⅛	+ ½	3.5	16.4
12.31	LMS Capital	15¼	– ¼	26.2	...
43,523.30	**London Stock Exchange**	8920	+ 522	1.8	37.4
8,748.42	**M&G**	363	+ 5½	5.6	28.8
3,569.19	Man Group‡	311¾	+ 9⅝	4.1	27.3
29.51	Manx Financial Grp♦‡	24	– ½	2.1	4.4
12.22	Marechale Capital♦	4¾		...	-14.8
1,170.75	Metro Bank	173¾	– 3¼	...	22.3
68,908.60	National Australia	2210½	+ 53⅜	4.0	19.1
56,705.20	**NatWest Group**	712⅜	+ 6⅝	4.9	13.3
357.58	PayPoint	600½	– 16½	6.6	10.2
26,150.40	**Prudential**	1044½	– 71½	1.9	9.1
5.71	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅜		...	-1.9
2,734.69	Quilter	200	+ 6¾	3.2	22.5
1,556.43	Rathbones Group	1720	+ 52	5.8	15.9
193.91	Rockwood Strategic	316		...	0.0
235.72	S & U	1940	– 5	5.9	9.9
12.49	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
221.32	Schroder REIT	45¼	+ ⅝	7.9	...
9,406.55	**Schroders‡**	584	– 4½	3.8	17.1
5,935.68	**St James's Place‡**	1147	+ 93½	1.6	11.5
48,602.60	**Standard Chart'd‡**	2219	+ 31	2.3	15.3
9,479.03	**Standard Life**	941½	+ 18½	5.9	-199.9
33,578.00	Sun Life Canada	6029⅞	– 131⅛	3.4	...
15.40	Tavistock Invs♦	3⅛		3.2	2.6
2,750.67	TBC Bank Grp	4936	+ 124	5.2	6.9
12.45	Tern♦	1⅜		...	-1.6
48.11	Time Finance♦	52	+ 1¾	...	8.2
3.72	Tooru♦	0⅛		...	-1.6
2.63	Truetide♦	3⅜	+ ¼	...	-6.0
209.04	Vanquis Banking Gp	81½	+ 3⅝	...	25.5
45.99	Volvere♦	2100		...	11.1
194,553.00	Wells Fargo‡	6433⅝	+ 9¾	2.3	...
67,906.70	Westpac Bkg Corp	1985⅜	+ 9	4.1	18.9
9.58	Worsley Investors	28⅜		...	...
82,277.10	Zurich Insurance	54407	– 2150⅝	5.1	18.5

Construction & Property

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
79.49	Alumasc♦	220	– 7½	5.0	8.5
13.96	Aseana Properties	4⅞		...	1.2
5.98	Built Cybernetics♦	1½		...	-150.0
4,208.78	Balfour Beatty	881	+ 18½	1.6	16.7
4,544.84	**Barratt Redrow**	323⅝	+ 30¼	5.3	23.8
2,399.58	Bellway	2124	+ 136	3.4	16.0
3,320.71	Berkeley	3626	+ 126	...	10.9
1,772.27	Big Yellow Grp	900	+ 12½	5.2	...
56.67	Billington Hldgs♦	425	+ 12½	2.6	40.9
211.32	Boot (Henry)	157	+ 5	5.0	8.9
1,225.93	Breedon	353¼	+ 22¼	4.3	14.6
4,542.52	**British Land**	443¼	+ 1¼	5.2	...
27.25	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2,323.14	Derwent London	2100	– 4	3.9	...
42.07	DCI Advisors♦	4⅝		...	-2.7
18.48	First Property♦	12½	+ ½	2.0	6.9
4.36	Fletcher King♦	42½	+ 5	5.3	28.7
110.92	Foxtons Group‡	37½	– 1¾	3.1	8.7
624.67	Galliford Try Hldgs	619	+ 29	3.2	18.4
791.11	Genuit Group	313⅝	+ 42⅜	4.1	17.2
161.26	Gleeson (MJ)	276	+ 4	4.0	10.2
1,954.78	Grafton Grp Units	1042¾	+ 77⅛	3.6	14.8
1,307.46	Grainger	176¼	+ 1¾	4.8	6.4
1,453.34	Great Portland Est	357¾	+ 8¾	2.3	0.0
2,191.02	Hammerson	374⅜	– 7⅝	4.9	...
591.79	Harworth Group	181	+ 50⅝	1.0	62.4
6.46	Heath (Samuel)♦	255		5.1	31.9
236.84	Helical	204	+ 5	1.3	42.2
367.17	Ibstock	93	– ¼	2.2	...
535.50	James Halstead♦	128⅝	+ 8⅝	6.9	13.3
2,131.19	Keller	3076	+ 52	2.6	15.2
12,788.70	Kingspan Group	7090¼		0.7	22.4
5,323.38	**Land Securities**	714½	+ 9	5.8	...
4,584.42	**LondonMetric Prop**	195	– 1¼	6.4	...
3.79	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6⅛	– ⅛	...	-0.3
458.88	Marshalls	181⅜	+ 19⅝	3.7	31.8
70.31	Michelmersh Brick♦	76½	– ½	6.0	19.0
2.24	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
2,181.97	Morgan Sindall	4494	+ 64	3.6	12.1
343.11	Mountview Estates‡	8800	+ 300	6.0	16.9
351.86	NewRiver REIT‡	81	– ⅝	8.3	...
27.97	Palace Capital	176	– 4	8.5	39.1
51.22	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
3,747.61	**Persimmon**	1166½	+ 59½	5.1	13.1
0.99	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
2,488.75	Primary Health Props‡	95⅞	+ 1½	7.6	...
54.03	Real Estate Inv♦	30⅞	+ ¼	4.9	-61.8
1,368.84	Safestore	626½	+ 11	4.9	...
1,698.42	Savills	976	+ 56	3.5	18.8
0.65	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
12,993.90	**Segro‡**	959⅝	– 5⅜	3.3	...
2,841.92	Shaftesbury Capital	145	+ 1¼	3.0	7.8
102.80	SIG	8¾	– ⅛	...	-1.6
1,505.05	SigmaRoc♦	135	+ 11¾	...	18.5
1,577.26	Sirius Real Estate	99⅛	+ ⅛	5.5	7.6
43.55	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
48.18	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.7
2,949.39	Taylor Wimpey	84½	+ 6½	4.9	30.2
54.18	Town Centre	128½	– 2	3.9	...
1,434.44	Travis Perkins	675	+ 120½	1.7	-8.1
4,514.21	**Tritax Big Box**	166¼	– 3¾	5.0	...
2,737.34	Unite Group	532½	– 5½	7.1	...
901.24	Vistry Group	283⅝	– 8¼	...	6.7
699.79	Workspace Group	363¼	+ 12⅜	7.2	...
24.13	Wynnstay Props♦	895	+ 30	3.2	12.5

Consumer Goods

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
675.34	AEP Plantations	176⅝	– 3⅜	3.4	10.3
10.96	Airea♦	26½	– 1	3.8	10.4
14,981.40	**AB Foods**	2130	+ 43	3.0	15.0
680.01	Barr (AG)	607	– 43	3.1	14.4
95,613.00	**British Amer Tob‡**	4421	– 149	5.5	12.6
4,203.97	**Burberry Group**	1164½	– 23	...	...
367.23	C&C Group	99⅛	– 2¾	5.0	...
20.68	Capital Metals♦	4¼	– ¼	...	-35.4
42.89	Churchill China♦	390	+ 5	5.4	9.8
18,077.40	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4960	– 50	2.1	22.4
73.60	Colefax♦	1455	– 25	0.4	10.3
2,861.94	Cranswick‡	5270	– 80	2.1	17.8
39,856.10	**Diageo**	1790	+ 155½	2.1	30.9
1.22	Distil♦	0		...	-0.6
873.68	Evans (M.P.)♦	1676	+ 50	3.6	10.4
72.25	Fevara	139½	+ 11	1.7	6.0
6,238.87	**Games Workshop‡**	18880	– 240	3.0	30.3
4,952.43	Glanbia	2072⅞	+ 98	1.8	38.2
2,117.42	Greencore	263⅜	+ 3	1.0	20.0
10.03	Headlam	12⅜	+ 5⅜	...	-0.1
551.43	Hilton Food	613	+ 14	5.7	7.0
21,456.50	**Imperial Brands**	2791	– 34	6.0	11.1
11,329.20	Kerry Group	7143¾	+ 99	1.7	20.8
285.72	McBride	164⅝	+ 1⅝	1.8	8.4
123.51	Mulberry Group♦	175	+ 17½	...	-13.5
380.32	Nichols♦‡	1040	– 20	3.7	17.7
301.41	Norcros	334	+ 18	3.4	...
394.06	Origin Ents♦	366		4.0	8.6
0.29	PACSCo♦	0⅜		...	-0.0
25.59	Portmeirion♦	50		...	-1.1
25.80	Provexis♦	1⅛		...	-55.0
457.88	PZ Cussons	106¾	– 4	3.5	22.7
48.21	REA	110	+ ½	...	-212.0
10.32	Tandem♦	187	+ 7	1.6	12.1
54.63	The Character Grp♦	315	+ 8	2.2	-46.7
2.58	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6½	+ ½	...	-15.1
100,607.00	**Unilever‡**	4670	– 73	3.4	12.6
69.62	Victoria♦	60⅛	– 4⅞	...	-0.2

Engineering

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
0.41	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
573.70	Avon Technologies‡	1896	+ 190	1.0	73.3
5,847.41	**Babcock**	1186½	+ 65½	0.6	28.2
66,687.70	**BAE Systems**	2220	+ 126	1.7	32.3
11.52	Braime A N/V♦	1200	– 50	1.4	6.4
10.80	Braime Group♦	2250		0.7	11.9
10.91	Caffyns‡	400		2.5	-9.8
10.33	Cap XX Ld♦	0⅛		...	-3.7
126.57	Castings‡	291	– 2	6.3	16.8
23.22	Checkit♦	21½	+ 3	...	-8.3
1,706.24	Chemring Group	627	+ 36½	1.3	35.2
13.34	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34½	+ ½	...	-38.3
610.80	Cohort♦	1298	+ 72	1.4	24.9
206.07	Dialight	510	+ 37	...	...
2.65	Feedback♦	6		...	-0.2
333.92	Gooch & Housego♦	1220		1.1	89.1
1,550.73	Goodwin	20650	+ 3330	1.4	63.1
14,411.30	**Halma‡**	3796	+ 266	0.7	38.5
2,426.41	Hill & Smith	3095	+ 245	1.7	30.1
3.56	Image Scan♦	2⅝	+ ½	...	-12.4
7,492.20	**IMI**	3136	+ 200	1.1	25.2
283.08	Judges Sci.♦	4250	– 320	2.7	51.4
11.15	LPA♦	82½	+ 1½	...	-31.2
6,048.56	**Melrose**	485⅜	+ 31⅛	1.5	16.7
702.76	Morgan Advanced	254	+ 28	4.8	33.9
98.49	Mpac♦	327½	+ 2½	...	-10.3
263.07	MS Intl♦	1600	+ 160	1.6	23.7
1,588.01	Oxford Instruments‡	2888	+ 156	0.8	34.1
19,532.30	Phillips Elec	1987¼	+ 41¾	3.7	-46.4
0.78	PipeHawk♦	2⅛	– ⅛	...	-3.0
3,810.48	Renishaw	5235	+ 287	1.5	45.4
127,447.00	**Rolls-Royce‡**	1530	+ 62¼	0.7	22.0
3,979.40	Rotork	487	+ ¾	1.7	35.3
95.16	SDI Group♦	91		...	19.4
1,224.70	Senior	292	+ 1½	0.7	-286.3
8,702.64	SKF Group	2040⅞		3.0	30.3
7,980.88	**Smiths**	2698	+ 56	1.7	31.5
105.52	Solid State♦	186	– 5½	1.5	25.8
120.38	Somero Enter♦	232½	+ 2½	3.3	16.5
5,536.95	**Spirax Group**	7500	+ 555	2.3	33.8
5.86	Tanfield♦	3⅝	– 1⅛	...	-3.5
285.76	Thorpe FW♦	255	+ 2	2.8	11.8
7.38	Transense Tech♦	48½		...	5.2
1,006.09	Vesuvius	405⅜	+ 34⅜	5.8	19.2
1,013.01	Volex	553	+ 42	0.9	21.2
7,066.64	**Weir**	2722	+ 86	1.5	28.4
497.85	XP Power	1776	+ 160	...	-42.3

Health

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
617.09	Advanced Medical♦	281	+ 1	1.0	60.8
348.29	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5½	– ½	...	-6.5
15.34	CelLBxHealth♦	1⅜	+ ⅛	...	-0.2
106.21	Anpario♦	530		2.4	13.2
184,511.00	**AstraZeneca‡**	11896	– 736	2.0	24.3
4.28	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1¾		...	2.6
4,543.08	**Convatec**	232⅜	+ 8⅜	2.4	36.5
16.10	Potter & Moore♦‡	23½	+ 1	2.3	7.7
66.74	Eco Animal Health♦	98½	– 1½	...	30.2
111.63	EKF Diagnostics♦	26	+ ¼	...	55.3
1.98	Futura Medical♦	0⅜	– ⅛	...	-0.1
1,533.10	Genus	2304	+ 110	1.4	78.6
79,310.30	**GSK**	1960½	+ 29	3.6	13.9
1.45	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.1
32,540.50	**Haleon**	369⅜	+ 6⅛	2.0	19.9
3,524.08	Hikma Pharma	1677	+ 92	3.8	12.4
1,605.10	Hutchmed China♦	184	+ 14	...	4.7
24.96	ImmuPharma♦	4	+ ⅜	...	-10.8
16.59	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
17.52	IXICO♦	8		...	-4.3
11.99	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-4.0
261.78	NIOX Group♦	62¼	+ 1¾	2.5	36.8
CHF239.45bn	Novartis	CHF125.98	- 0.62	2.9	41.3
611.27	Oxford Biomedica	505	– 55	...	-18.8
2.11	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.7
6.31	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
33,697.50	**Reckitt Benck‡**	5306	+ 66	4.1	11.3
14.89	RUA Life Sci♦	24		...	-103.0
31.87	Sareum Holdings♦	23		...	-9.6
9,331.84	**Smith & Neph**	1113	– 45½	2.6	20.8
942.46	Spire Healthcare	234	+ ½	0.6	57.1
4.17	Talisman Metals♦	6½	+ ¼	...	1.8
2.11	ValiRx♦	0⅛		...	-0.3

Industrials

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
170.21	Accsys Tech♦	69	– 2¼	...	30.2
39,196.20	BASF	4391⅝	+ 71½	4.4	28.2
41,983.10	Bayer	4273⅜	+ 150	0.2	-13.6
1,657.57	Coats Group	86½	+ 6¼	2.9	19.7
4,559.10	**Croda**	3265	+ 60	3.4	73.5
43.00	Cropper (James)♦	450	+ 70	...	14.6
1,064.07	Elementis	187¼	+ 10	1.8	-32.4
78.81	Hardide♦	100	– 3½	...	...
16,151.90	International Paper	3050	– 5	4.5	-7.6
3,643.45	Johnson Matthey	2168	+ 176	3.6	-37.9
4,068.06	Mondi	921⅝	+ 29⅜	1.3	28.8
20.94	Robinson♦	125		4.8	9.2
7,283.67	Swire Pacific	935	– 7⅞	4.0	45.6
19.50	Symphony Enviro♦	8¼		...	-7.6
200.08	Synthomer	122	+ 34	...	-1.3
41,662.40	Takeda Pharma	2600⅝	+ 27¾	3.7	-57.3
716.18	Victrex	822	+ 39	7.2	25.7
86.73	Wynnstay♦	375	+ 10	4.8	38.0
208.51	Zotefoams	420	– 40½	1.9	9.1

Leisure

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
100.85	Accesso Tech♦	303	– 16½	...	14.6
194.93	Celtic♦	205	– 8	...	5.7
790.52	Domino's Pizza	205⅜	+ 4	5.6	13.6
3,487.50	**Entain**	545	+ 3⅝	3.6	-5.2
204.03	Evoke	45¼	+ ⅞	...	-0.4
86.72	Gaming Realms♦	32	+ 1¼	...	15.8
5.53	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
7.16	Heavitree A♦	225		2.9	4.2
$23.312bn	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$158	– $2.7	1.2	32.2
1,695.05	Mitch & Butlers	282½	+ 6½	...	9.5
272.82	On The Beach	189¾	+ 2¼	2.1	34.5
481.55	Rank Group	102¾	+ 6	2.9	10.8
1,628.79	SSP	214¼	+ 14⅞	2.1	-23.0
8.14	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
863.51	Wetherspoon JD	814	+ 36	1.5	13.6
4,222.05	**Whitbread**	2517	+ 7	3.9	20.4

Media

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
5.66	Aeorema Comms♦	60	– 2	4.4	47.7
17.19	Altitude Group♦	23½	– 2½	...	-94.0
10.63	Arcontech Group♦	79½	+ ½	5.0	11.3
4,075.43	**Autotrader**	521	– 2¾	2.2	15.2
530.46	Bloomsbury Pub‡	650	+ 39	2.5	19.6
2.15	Caledonian Hldgs♦	1⅝		...	-0.1
8.86	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
2.22	Catenai♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
13.24	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
296.85	Future	329⅝	+ 23¾	5.2	5.3
646.26	GlobalData	86¾	+ 7½	1.7	19.7
97.14	IG Design Group♦	102	– 4	1.0	-0.9
11,368.40	**Informa‡**	904⅜	+ 18⅝	2.5	...
2,766.01	ITV	73	– 1¼	6.8	12.4
457.81	ME Group	122¼	+ 11⅜	6.9	8.1
1.49	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	12.5
16.37	Mission Group♦	18		...	-0.8
1,033.73	Mony Group‡	201⅜	+ 4⅞	6.3	13.2
7,734.24	News Corp A	2119⅝	+ 61¼	0.7	...
4,435.33	News Corp B	2429⅝	+ 103	0.6	...
333.97	Next 15 Group♦‡	327	+ 33½	4.7	-10.9
7,361.13	**Pearson**	1224	– 33	2.1	23.8
4.22	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
136.09	Reach‡	42¾	– 1¾	13.8	-1.0
9.57	React♦	40½	– 2	...	-27.9
45,974.20	**Relx‡**	2627	+ 20	2.6	23.3
3,510.20	Rightmove	473	+ 8⅜	2.3	16.8
2.75	SpaceandPeople♦	137½		...	6.4
49.88	STV Group	106¾	+ 2¾	...	-9.9
41.24	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
9,119.06	21st Cent Fox A	4573¼		0.9	...
7,395.40	21st Cent Fox B	3357¾		1.2	...
249.25	Wilmington	278	– 8	4.2	21.6
4,438.19	WPP	411⅜	+ 112¾	3.6	8.2
16.87	Zinc Media♦	56½		...	-5.5

Natural Resources

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
0.60	ADM Energy#	0		...	1.2
126.19	H-Power♦	11⅛	+ ½	...	-4.6
166.73	Afentra♦	60⅝	– 1⅞	...	-58.4
3.38	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.1
9.45	Alien Metals♦	0⅛		...	-13.3
53.70	Aminex	1¼		...	-13.5
17,512.40	Anglo Amer Plat	6601¼	+ 1035¼	6.9	24.5
47,381.20	**Anglo Amer**	4022	+ 289	0.7	-16.4
483.70	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	422	+ 42	0.7	36.7
39,247.00	**Antofagasta**	3981	+ 326	1.2	39.8
13.53	Arc Minerals♦	0½		...	-1.2
40.36	Ariana Resources♦	1½	+ ⅛	...	-150.0
11.57	Arkle Resources♦	0¾		...	-10.6
52.60	Asiamet Resources♦	1½	+ ⅛	...	-13.1
1,489.16	Atalaya Mine	968½	+ 83	1.0	18.6
3.68	Beacon Energy♦	3		...	-0.7
6.47	Beowulf Mining♦	10	+ 3	...	-3.0

PRICES

Major indices

New York (midday)

Dow Jones	5403693 (+151.83)
Nasdaq	26690.62 (+342.26)
S&P 500	7757.64 (+47.68)

Tokyo

Nikkei 225	65606.71 (-76.55)

Hong Kong

Hang Seng	25668.03 (+137.75)

Amsterdam

Amsterdam AEX	1111.47 (-1.00)

Sydney

Australia AO	9445.10 (-6.90)

Frankfurt

DAX	26319.45 (+179.32)

Singapore

Singapore Straits	5698.43 (+59.44)

Brussels

Brussels BEL20	5777.71 (+17.51)

Paris

Paris CAC	8714.93 (+15.22)

Zurich

Zurich SMI	14544.91 (+26.16)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6523.86 (+21.30)

London

FTSE100	10901.09 (+33.20)
FTSE250	24854.86 (+159.44)
FTSE350	5941.63 (+20.28)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5112.00 (+19.10)
FTSE All Share	5876.54 (+20.40)
FTSE Non Financials	6413.67 (nc)
TechMark Focus	9575.59 (-19.86)
US$	1.3489 (+0.0023)
Euro	1.1675 (+0.0001)
SDR	0.9866 (+0.0009)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	87.29	87.8	87.09	87.53		1331623
	26-Dec				87.47		1741
	27-Mar				87.37		
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.2525	96.2525	96.25	96.25		401827
	26-Sep	96.135	96.165	96.135	96.15		428271
	26-Dec	95.935	96	95.93	95.965		536126
	27-Mar	95.795	95.88	95.79	95.835		391890
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.74	95.83	95.73	95.78		384554
	27-Sep	95.73	95.815	95.72	95.77		242932
	27-Dec	95.745	95.83	95.74	95.79		294399
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.42	97.435	97.42	97.425		666575
	26-Dec	97.265	97.305	97.26	97.285		952477
	27-Mar	97.155	97.215	97.15	97.185		472111
	27-Jun	97.105	97.17	97.1	97.14		485355
	27-Sep	97.095	97.165	97.09	97.135		439888
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun	100.05	100.05	100.0475	100.05		70792
	26-Sep	100.045	100.045	100.04	100.045		75775
	26-Dec	99.99	100	99.985	99.995		52702
	27-Mar	99.905	99.915	99.89	99.905		34772
	27-Jun	99.82	99.835	99.805	99.825		25542
	27-Sep	99.75	99.775	99.735	99.755		27274
	27-Dec	99.695	99.72	99.68	99.7		21040
FTSE100	26-Sep	10866	10969.5	10850.5	10916		477243
	26-Dec	11025	11025	11025	10984		759
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8869	0	
	26-Dec				8914.6		

Tradeweb

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Commodities

Natural Gas $

2.672	+0.032

Light Crude Oil

77.05	-0.24

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

WTI SEP 26	77.05	-0.24
WTI OCT 26	76.09	-0.07
WTI NOV 26	75	0.09
WTI DEC 26	73.73	0.13
WTI JAN 27	72.71	0.19

Products

Fuel Oil	463.643	16.305
Euro Naphtha	702.68	33.914

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Aug1183-1182.75	Dec994.25-994
Sep1124.75-1124.5	Jan964.25-963.75
Oct1086.25-1085.75	
Nov1040.75-1040.5	Volume: 213290

Brent

Oct82.17-82.15	Jan77.67-77.64
Nov80.38-80.36	Feb76.74-76.72
Dec78.86-78.83	Volume: 734972

Cocoa

Sep 4249 -7	Sep 4351 +2
Dec 4284 -4	Dec 4315 +8
Mar 4380 +3	Mar 4380 +3
May 4386 +0	May 4386 +0
Jul 4383 -4	Volume: 27805

Robusta Coffee

Sep 3787 +4	May 3691 -18
Nov 3767 -6	Jul 3674 -16
Jan 3744 -7	
May3691 -18	Volume: 27446

White Sugar

Oct503.4 +17.8	Aug497.6 +16.5
Dec503.2 +18.3	Oct492.9 +14.9
May503.6 +17.9	
May503.6 +17.9	Volume: 47894

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Nov199.5 +2.25	May205.75 +1.75
Jan 201.25	Jul 208
Mar 203.5	Volume: 8731

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
25.69	Bezant Resources◆	0⅛		...	9.3
170,023.00	BHP Group	3346	+ 212	3.1	25.4
95.67	Border & Sthn Pet◆	10⅞	– ¼	...	-91.5
43.04	Bougainville	10¾	– ½	...	-16.0
81,222.00	**BP**	517¼	– 35¼	4.8	...
1.76	Buccaneer Energy◆	0		...	-0.6
22.24	Cadence Minerals◆	5⅛	+ ¼	...	-9.8
9.42	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11.2
312.26	Caledonia Mining◆	1615	+ 225	2.6	7.7
44.77	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3.5
274.74	Cent Asia Metals◆	154⅝	+ 7¼	7.8	-4.9
42.29	Chariot Ltd◆	1½	– ⅛	...	...
1.56	Clontarf Energy◆	0		...	-6.3
33.42	Corcel◆	0⅜		...	-2.1
7.52	Crism Therapeutics◆	9½		...	-1.9
1,535.64	DRD Gold	177	+ 24⅞	2.3	14.8
7.20	ECR Minerals◆	0¼		...	-3.3
3.15	Empyrean Energy◆	0		...	-0.4
9,776.18	**Endeavour**	4046	+ 524	3.3	19.5
427.09	EnQuest	22⅞	– 1	3.5	...
67.88	Eurasia Mining◆	2¼	– ¼	...	15.3
23.70	Europa Oil & Gas◆	1¾	+ ⅛	...	-9.0
170.95	Ferrexpo#	28⅝		...	-4.5
21,104.60	**Fresnillo**	2864	+ 389	3.9	20.6
154.49	Galantas Gold◆	24½	+ 4	...	-6.6
12.75	GCM Resources◆	3⅜	– ¼	...	-4.9
5.65	Gem Diamonds	4	+ ⅝	...	-0.1
4.73	Getech◆	3⅛	+ ¼	...	-7.4
65,380.50	**Glencore**	557	+ 14	2.3	...
5.86	Geo Exploration◆	0⅛		...	-4.5
27,224.60	Gold Fields	3041¾	+ 627¼	3.8	...
31.78	Goldplat◆	18½	+ ¾	2.8	30.8
11.74	Goldstone Res◆	0¾		...	-0.9
4,324.62	Greatland Resources◆	641	+ 125	...	19.3
507.73	Griffin Mining◆	293	– 2	...	32.7
379.40	Gulf Keystone	174⅜	+ 3⅝	7.3	33.8
2,621.17	Hochschild	509½	+ 78⅛	0.9	17.6
674.62	Hunting	443	– ½	2.2	22.8
4.35	Ironveld◆	0		...	-2.1
759.86	ITM Power◆	109⅞	+ 7¾	...	-14.9
80.77	Jubilee Metals◆	2½		...	-3.4
1.33	Karel Diamond Res◆	0⅝		...	-3.9
173.80	KEFI Gold and Copper◆	1¼	+ ¼	...	-11.5
187.38	Kenmare Res	210	+ 12	...	-0.8
6.70	Landore Res◆	1¾		...	-1.8
2.44	Lansdowne Resources◆	0⅛		...	-1.5
13.51	Lexington Gold◆	2⅞		...	-29.6
430.02	Metals Exploration◆	14	+ 1½	...	18.1
2.45	Nativo Resources◆	0⅛		...	-0.1
5.95	Nostrum Oil & Gas	3⅝	– ⅜	...	-0.0
16.89	Oriole Resources◆	0⅜		...	-17.2
	Ormonde Mining			...	...
64.01	Orosur Mining◆	16	+ 1¼	...	...
2,675.07	Pan African Res	109¾	+ 17⅝	2.0	20.7
201.77	Pantheon Res◆	13⅞	+ 1¾	...	-49.1
23.49	Parkmead Group◆	21½		...	3.2
23.05	Petra Diamonds	6½	+ ⅜	...	-0.2
1.77	Petrel Resources◆	0⅞		...	-4.0
19.98	Petro Matad◆	1⅛	+ ⅛	...	-4.8
5.44	Plexus Holdings◆	3⅛		...	-1.2
419.27	Porvair‡	900	+ 50	0.8	22.9
13.66	Prospex Energy◆	3⅛	+ ¼	...	-4.7
22.75	Quadrise◆	1		...	-6.2
9.43	Reabold Resources◆	65	– 8	...	-812.5
1.98	Red Rock Res◆	0		...	-0.3
34,582.90	Rio Tinto Ltd	9301	+ 398¾	3.7	17.6
94,487.90	**Rio Tinto**	7528	+ 354	4.6	16.5
24.18	Rome Resources◆	0⅜		...	-15.4
242.66	Serabi Gold◆	318	+ 68	1.6	6.0
902.39	Serica Energy◆	229⅝	– 5⅝	7.0	-23.8
182,045.00	**Shell**	3277½	– 106	4.6	14.6
4.03	Shuka Minerals◆	2¾	– ⅛	...	-2.1
3.89	Sound Energy◆	1¾	+ ⅛	...	-1.5
46.34	Star Energy◆	24	– ½	...	-4.3
6.62	Sunda Energy◆	1½	– ⅛	...	-1.4
1.83	Sunrise Resources◆	0		...	-3.2
1.56	Synergia Energy◆	0		...	0.5
4.65	Tertiary Minerals◆	0⅛		...	-6.5
5.15	Thor Energy◆	0½		...	-0.6
144,801.00	Total Eng SE	6346¼	– 187¼	4.7	12.4
7.06	Tower Resources◆	0		...	-0.4
211.50	Tullow Oil	14	– 1⅜	...	47.1
3.47	UK Oil & Gas◆	0		...	-0.2
3.93	URU Metals◆	4	+ ⅛	...	-2.7
6.00	Vast Resources#	0⅛		...	-0.5
4.54	Westmount Energy◆	3⅛		...	-8.3
15.47	Xtract Resources◆	1¼		...	-5.7
68.27	Zephyr Energy◆	3¼	– ¼	...	-7.6

Professional & Support Services

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
1,387.22	4imprint	4924	+ 806	3.6	16.4
240.69	Andrews Sykes◆	575	+ 10	4.5	13.3
173.48	BTG Consulting◆	107½	+ 1½	4.3	20.3
9,307.44	**Bunzl**	2870	+ 68	2.6	20.4
318.99	Capita	264	+ 5½	...	-1.8
8.19	CEPS◆	39	– 1½	...	-11.1
40.45	Christie Group◆	152½	– 3½	2.3	30.0
40,580.70	**Compass**	2386½	+ 30⅛	2.1	29.2
9.67	Croma Security◆	70	+ 2½	3.4	12.2
5,445.79	**DCC Energy**	6375	+ 45	3.4	...
16.90	Diales Grp◆	32		4.7	24.6
10,342.40	**Diploma**	7700	+ 380	0.8	55.8
810.98	DiscoverIE	833	+ 58	1.6	27.6
323.63	Essentra	114	+ 9¾	1.8	...
25,701.40	**Experian**	2897	+ 107	1.8	23.8
18.15	FIH Group◆	145	+ 12½	4.7	-3.5
245.02	Hargreaves Servs◆	798	+ 2	5.0	8.6
8,989.62	**Intertek**	5840		2.8	26.8
1,804.28	Int'l Workplace	189⅝	– 7½	0.5	...
540.68	Johnson Service	148⅜	– 2	3.2	16.0
87.49	Journeo◆	495	+ 18½	...	20.4
1,094.43	Kier Group	250⅝	+ 11	3.1	19.6
208.66	Latham (J)◆‡	1035	– 22½	3.5	11.2
441.32	London Security◆	3600		2.7	18.6
255.84	LSL Property Servs	258	+ 13	4.4	15.5
113.54	Macfarlane	73	– ¼	5.0	18.3
12.18	Maintel Holdings◆	65	– 7½	...	-5.5
7.20	Malvern Intl◆	21½	+ ½	...	-2.8
378.73	Mears Group	455	+ 24	4.0	8.2
638.18	Michael Page	194¼	+ 12½	2.4	67.0
2,683.32	Mitie Group‡	206¼	– ¾	2.2	31.2
7.18	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2.1
10.37	Newmark Security◆	110		...	15.6
3.72	Norman Broadbent◆	185	– 10	...	5.8
16.91	Northern Bear◆	123	+ 5½	6.1	4.1
76.38	NWF Group◆	154	+ 14½	5.6	8.3
43.47	PCI-PAL◆	60	+ 4	...	...
6.22	Petards◆	10¼		...	-15.3
0.80	PHSC◆	7¾		...	-2.6
11.27	PowerHouse Energy◆	0¼		...	-3.1
87.58	Record	44	– ⅛	8.2	11.2
731.47	Renew Holdings◆	924	+ 27	2.2	15.0
9,096.27	**Rentokil**	360⅛	+ 15¼	2.6	26.1
405.53	Restore◆	301½	+ 3½	2.4	-64.1
4.47	River Global A◆‡	2½		...	-0.3
26.30	Roebuck Food Group◆	26		...	-9.0
3,497.46	RS Group	743½	+ 42	3.1	21.5
11.30	RTC Group◆	90		7.5	6.4
437.97	RWS Holdings◆	118	+ 21⅝	5.4	-4.4
237.44	Science Group◆	585		1.7	7.8
2,589.68	Serco	265¾	+ 24¼	1.7	18.5
176.83	Smiths News	71⅜	– 1⅝	7.8	6.1
62.41	Software Circel◆	16	+ ¼	...	-76.2
50.69	Staffline Group◆	43¾	+ ¼	...	11.2
349.38	SThree	285½	+ 30	5.0	20.8
32.92	Synectics◆	185		2.7	8.4
2.80	Thruvision Group◆	0⅝		...	-0.6
134.93	Tribal◆	63		2.1	15.0
18.76	Vianet◆	66		3.6	46.2
1,068.68	ZIGUP	467	+ 4½	5.8	13.9

Retailing

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
560.52	AO World	98⅝	+ 1¼	...	15.5
2,361.82	B&M European	235	+ 12⅜	4.1	14.4
257.87	Card Factory	76¼	+ 1	6.6	8.5
889.25	CVS Group	1300	+ 48	0.7	17.6
362.26	DFS Furniture	153½	+ 12	0.7	14.6
1,804.33	Dunelm	895	+ 25½	7.8	11.6
3,617.23	Frasers Group	808½	– 2	...	9.3
1,961.26	Greggs	1918	+ 38	3.6	16.0
538.57	Halfords	246	+ 3	3.7	16.2
4,592.97	**Howden Joinery**	840	+ 51½	2.6	17.1
2,924.14	Inchcape‡	837½	– 1	4.0	11.6
1.85	Imaging Biometrics	0¾	+ ⅛	...	-4.4
4,568.10	**JD Sports**	95	+ 5½	1.3	11.0
5,403.62	**Kingfisher**	327⅝	+ 19	3.8	23.4
8,501.88	**Marks & Spencer**	408¾	+ 3⅝	1.0	32.2
5.53	Mothercare◆	1	+ ¼	...	0.9
48.63	Naked Wines◆	73⅜	+ 1¼	...	-8.0
18,768.20	**Next**	15685	+ 840	1.7	20.6
1,811.86	Ocado	214¾	+ 3	...	4.5
939.55	Pets at Home	211¾	+ 1¼	3.5	15.3
494.93	Pinewood Tech Group	430		...	89.6
1,079.62	Saga	738	+ 66	...	...
7,817.82	**Sainsbury's**	353⅛	– 6¼	3.9	20.4
688.82	WH Smith	452⅜	+ 19	...	-4.1
28.23	Sosandar◆	13	– ½	...	92.9
29,765.60	**Tesco**	475⅛	– 14⅜	3.1	17.3
71.00	Topps Tiles	36⅛	+ ⅝	8.6	11.8

Technology

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
496.26	Alfa Financial	166¼	+ 2⅜	5.8	16.3
107.95	Aptitude Software	198	+ 2	2.7	27.1
48.16	Bango◆	62½	– 4	...	-8.6
55.61	BATM Adv Coms	12⅝	+ ⅛	...	-4.0
111.57	Berkeley Res	25	– ¾	...	-65.4
7.20	Blackbird◆	1½		...	-2.4
40.00	Celebrus Tech◆‡	106½	– 2	3.2	-118.7
21.73	Cirata◆	13⅜	– 1⅝	...	-3.0
1.50	CloudCoCo◆	0⅛		...	0.4
5,129.46	**Computacenter**	4828	+ 230	1.5	33.0
227.10	Concurrent Tech◆	250	– 17½	0.5	42.7
44.81	Corero◆	8¾	+ ½	...	-118.0
451.25	Craneware◆	1318	+ 154	2.5	31.6
5.75	Crimson Tide◆	87½		...	20.8
35.19	CyanConnode Hldgs◆	9¾	+ ¼	...	-8.4
3.90	Dillistone Group◆	11	+ ¼	...	-7.5
2.58	Forgent◆	0		...	-0.0
122.06	FDM Group	111¼	– 12	6.3	21.4
536.66	Filtronic◆	244	+ 6	...	...
543.57	GB Group	237½	+ 16½	1.9	-7.7
51.21	Ilika◆	25¾	– ¾	...	-6.4
9.79	Ingenta◆	67½	+ 7	6.7	5.6
71.58	Intercede◆	118	+ 11	...	20.7
14.23	Iomart◆	12½	+ ⅜	...	-1.5
625.60	IQE◆	47	+ 7⅞	...	-12.5
251.00	LG Electronics	1460½	– 114⅞	1.7	...
55.62	MTI Wireless◆	64½	– 1½	3.2	14.8
4.69	Nanoco Group	2⅜	– ⅛	...	-2.1
201.30	Netcall◆	118		0.8	48.2
6.64	Northamber◆	24½		2.4	-1.7
42.87	Oxford Metrics◆	38¼	+ ⅛	8.5	-69.6
13.81	Pennant Intl◆	29	– ½	...	-5.8
1,136.35	Playtech	367⅜	– 11¼	...	0.9
47.46	Pulsar Group◆	35	– ½	...	-4.5
2,857.38	QinetiQ‡	553½	+ 47½	2.0	27.5
96.12	RM	98	– 3½	...	37.7
224.99	Seeing Machines◆	4⅝	+ ⅛	...	-11.1
14.66	Shearwater Group◆	61½	– ½	...	-1.5
3,926.02	Softcat	1994	+ 64	1.5	29.9
0.69	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0.2
23,346.70	Tele Ericsson	750¾	+ 19½	3.1	11.3
9,481.62	**The Sage Grp**	1048½	+ 75¼	2.1	27.8
6.54	Touchstar◆‡	82½	– 3	3.9	-6.2
92.32	Tracsis◆	310	– 32½	0.9	...
68.92	Triad Group‡	395	+ 25	2.3	39.8
51.71	Water Intel◆	307½		...	14.5
94.99	Xaar	119	– 1	...	-27.7
11.31	Zoo Digital◆	11½	+ ¾	...	-4.1

Telecoms

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
11,966.30	**Airtel Africa**	329⅜	– 3⅝	1.6	23.9
19,865.50	**BT Group‡**	199¼	– 2	4.2	18.1
1,766.99	Currys	162	– 5⅞	1.9	10.5
882.34	Gamma Comms	988	+ 52	2.2	14.2
2,105.43	Helios Towers‡	202⅝	+ 6¾	0.9	73.9
19.02	Gana Media◆	0⅛		...	-3.4
668.55	Telecom Plus‡	857	+ 6	5.8	8.5
27,847.60	**Vodafone**	120½	+ 2⅝	3.3	-85.3

Transport

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
74.40	Braemar‡	225	– 3	3.1	31.1
1,498.19	Clarkson	4840	+ 110	2.4	22.6
5,086.25	EasyJet	671	+ 41	2.0	10.2
1,006.09	FirstGroup‡	183¾	– ¾	3.9	8.6
243.49	Fisher (James)	481	+ 38	...	-55.3
19,456.90	**Intl Cons Air**	442⅜	+ 10½	1.5	7.2
987.30	Irish Cont	665	– 12½	2.1	16.7
157.70	Mobico Group	25⅝	+ 1⅞	...	-1.1
6.07	Sutton Harbour◆	4¼		...	-0.4
1,133.15	Wizz Air	1095	+ 33	...	...

Utilities

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
7,125.50	**Centrica**	154¼	– ¾	3.7	-102.8
2,417.41	Drax Group	718	– 19½	4.2	34.7
51.22	Jersey Electricity	440	– 5	5.0	12.3
60,321.60	**National Grid**	1200	+ 10	4.0	18.3
2,217.36	Pennon‡	469¾	+ 6¾	6.2	24.2
9,490.15	**Severn Trent**	3142	+ 124	4.0	25.4
28,976.30	**SSE‡**	2390	+ 44	2.9	22.7
10,667.50	**United Utilities**	1436	+ 53	3.7	16.7

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

Mkt cap (million)	Company	Price (p)	Wkly +/-	Yld%	P/E
28,910.50	**3i Group**	2867	+ 3	2.9	5.3
3,546.44	3i Infrastructure	384½	+ 4½	3.5	12.0
1,331.49	Aberforth Smlr‡	1732	+ 28	2.8	27.1
5,136.63	**Alliance Witan**	1384	+ 39	2.1	74.8
115.46	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	397	+ 15	3.9	32.1
3.56	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
1,050.20	AVI Global	266	+ 12½	1.7	52.5
379.19	AVI Japan	170½	+ 6½	1.3	58.0
170.78	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	313½	+ 7½	0.8	...
358.93	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	125	+ 8	0.6	...
702.15	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1078	+ 42	0.9	...
335.40	Baillie Gifford SN	172	+ 10⅝	0.4	...
244.15	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	230	+ 10	2.7	36.9
1,396.39	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	152¼	+ 5¼	1.9	67.6
1,258.43	BH Macro GBP	419½	+ 2½	...	19.8
321.63	Biotech Growth	1692	+ 90	...	-890.5
191.19	BlckRck Amer Inc	287	+ 8	5.2	...
180.59	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	180½	+ 6½	3.2	51.6
317.66	BlckRck Fro Inv	192½	+ 5½	4.0	25.6
553.35	BlackRock Grt Euro	614	+ 26	1.2	89.1
42.40	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	229	+ 2	3.4	31.7
688.20	BlckRck Smlr‡	283	+ 14	2.8	32.3
1,835.45	BlckRck Wld Min	982	+ 99	2.4	40.8
179.22	Brown Adv US Sm	1632½	+ 40	...	-272.5
671.51	Brunner‡	1564	+ 26	1.7	56.1
1,975.28	Caledonia Inv	386	– 2	2.0	50.1
3,077.67	City of Lon IT‡	597	+ 4	3.7	27.7
	Crystal Amber Fd	88½		-64.1	...
365.55	CT Priv Eq Ord	512	+ 12	5.5	...
338.61	CT UK Cap & Inc	363	+ 5	3.7	29.9
34.42	CT UK HIT B‡	112	– ½	5.3	23.1
107.23	CT UK HIT‡	118	+ 2	5.1	24.3
	Dunedin Ent#	475	4.8	...	...
1,074.80	Edinburgh IT	861	+ 17	3.7	32.4
856.06	Edin Wwide	247½	+ 15	...	-223.0
6,461.01	**F&C Inv Trust**	343⅜	+ 12¼	1.2	76.4
383.94	Fidlty Asian Val	612	+ 24	3.3	27.2
1,217.90	Fidelity China Sp	267½	– ½	3.4	29.0
558.45	FdityEmrgMkt	1432	+ 62	1.4	62.3
2,180.07	Fidelity European Trust	443	+ 14½	2.2	39.2
1,541.13	Fidlty Spec Val	475	+ 11½	2.2	38.7
826.28	Fins Gwth & Inc	826	+ 22	2.4	43.7
642.77	GCP Infrastructure‡	81¾	– 1¾	8.6	38.0
96.43	Global Opps Tst	330	+ 8	3.1	42.3
	Golden Prospect‡	98⅝		-14.7	...
	Greencoat Renew	66⅛	8.8	-16.4	...
2,460.82	Greencoat UK Wind	114	+ 2⅛	9.4	-13.1
224.96	Hansa Investment Co‡	334	– 2	1.3	75.9
409.83	Hansa Inv Co A‡	321	+ 8	1.4	73.0
2,398.76	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3450	+ 115	...	-58.2
355.99	Hend High Inc	210	+ 5	5.3	18.6
538.96	Hend Smlr	991	+ 38	2.9	38.0
579.79	Herald Inv Trust	3035	+ 85	...	...
1,793.86	HgCapital Trust	396	+ 6	1.3	...
2,586.15	HICL Infra	139	+ 3	6.1	10.1
898.78	ICG Ent Tr	1478	+ 38	2.8	-416.3
170.98	Impax Env Mkts	440	+ 8	1.2	89.1
979.36	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	492½	+ 9½	3.9	50.1
497.07	Invesco Bond Inc‡	170½	+ ½	7.2	13.0
538.95	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	421	+ 9	3.8	84.0
2,063.05	JPM American	1250	+ 50	0.9	...
383.74	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	570	+ 12	5.5	...
220.50	JPM China‡	277	+ 8½	4.9	71.2
535.40	JPM Claverhs‡	984	+ 10	3.7	29.2
97.05	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	240	– 10½	0.2	...
1,537.18	JPM Em Mkts‡	163⅜	+ 1⅝	4.6	71.0
569.85	JPMorgan Euro	634	+ 9	2.5	34.9
529.36	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	205	+ 5½	2.9	36.0
3,484.42	JPM GG&I	638½	+ 29½	3.9	77.2
394.54	JPM India‡	904	+ 22	4.9	...
1,264.51	JPM Japan	837	+ 48	1.0	82.5
219.67	JPM Smllr Co	451½	+ 19½	0.7	...
1,714.00	Law Debenture	1276	+ 34	2.9	34.2
411.66	Lowland Inv	188	+ 5½	3.6	27.9
	Marwyn Val Inv‡	138½	6.5	15.3	...
1,817.25	Mercantile IT	288	+ 11½	2.9	31.1
1,011.29	Merchants Trust‡	685	+ 19	4.3	22.4
213.63	Mid Wynd	794	+ 24	1.1	...
2,483.91	Monks Inv Trust‡	1620	+ 42	0.1	...
204.90	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	177	+ 3	0.9	91.2
948.07	Murray Income Trust‡	1016	– 4	4.0	26.3
2,203.60	Murray Intl‡	370	+ 1½	3.5	26.6
482.19	Pacific Assets Trust	422	+ 10	1.4	75.4
1,565.98	Pantheon Intl	400	+ 5	...	...
6,780.96	**Pershing Sqr**	3912	+ 104	1.4	3.7
1,708.98	Personal Assets	555	+ 10	1.0	92.0
7,343.31	**Polar CapTech**	664	+ 37½	...	-790.5
1,819.06	Renewables Infra	78⅛	+ 2	9.7	-14.5
3,281.05	RIT Cap Ptnr	2630	+ 65	1.7	...
29.03	Riverstone	602	+ 13	...	-374.2
645.03	Schroder TotRt	697	+ 7	1.6	71.0
1,024.26	Schrd Asia Pac	819	+ 28	1.6	62.0
244.73	Schrod Inc Gwth	375	+ 5	3.9	29.9
447.02	Schrod Jap Gwth	393	+ 20	3.1	56.9
256.51	Schrod UKMid‡	780	+ 30	2.9	31.2
107.69	Schroder UK PP Tr	17		...	-70.6
828.75	Scot American	570	+ 15	2.9	36.4
14,930.10	**Scot Mortgage**	1396½	+ 66	0.3	...
1,273.65	Sequoia Eco‡	86¾	+ ⅜	7.9	12.7
253.00	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	232	+ 3	3.6	35.7
2,871.14	Temp Emg Mkt	312	+ 7	1.7	57.9
1,314.50	Temple Bar	429	+ 9½	3.6	31.1
807.81	The Glbl Smaller‡	195¾	+ 4	1.6	66.4
	Potentially AI	6¾		-1.7	...
1,002.83	TR Property	316	– 2	5.1	20.0
	UIL	198	4.0	19.5	...
501.34	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	290	+ 3	3.3	21.4
885.48	Vietnam Ent Inv	716	+ 13	...	4.6
1,374.13	Ww Health	384	+ 8	0.6	...

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91062 (-0.00209)
Canada $	1.8805 (-0.00373)
Denmark Kr	8.72746 (+0.00076)
Euro	1.1671 (-0.0003)
Hong Kong $	10.587 (+0.039)
Hungary	424.33 (-1.31)
Indonesia	24151.93 (+75.07)
Israel	4.045 (-0.0144)
Japan Yen	212.55 (-0.581)
New Zealand $	2.29128 (-0.00107)
Norway Kr	12.8072 (-0.0242)
Poland	5.0184 (+0.00399)
Russia	110.542 (-1.107)
S Africa	21.82622 (-0.1536)
Sweden Kr	12.786 (-0.00287)
Switzerland Fr	1.09001 (-0.00269)
Turkey Lira	64.3696 (+0.2648)
USA $	1.3496 (+0.0045)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4239.55

Close $4341.425 **High** $4371.89

Low $4229.75

AM $4301.85 **PM** $4335.55

Platinum $1747.9

Silver $63.3241

Palladium $1373.732

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7275	8.7272	-150.066	-426.212
Euro	1.1671	1.1670	-14.97	-42.7
Montreal	1.8805	1.8842	-25.22	-77.48
New York	1.3496	1.3451	-0.51	-0.49
Oslo	12.8076	12.8343	42.94	152.97
Tokyo	212.5560	213.1130	-55.72	-154.02
Zurich	1.0900	1.0927	-36.78	-111.7

Other sterling

Argentine peso	2022.67749-2022.67944
Australian dollar	1.91062-1.91082
Bahrain dinar	0.50780-0.50980
Brazilian real	6.86650-6.86850
Euro	1.16710-1.16790
Hong Kong dollar	10.58700-10.59100
Indian rupee	128.42030-128.50031
Indonesian rupiah	24151.92969-24191.92969
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41570-0.41770
Malaysian ringgit	5.51910-5.52110
New Zealand dollar	2.29092-2.29152
Singaporean dollar	1.72496-1.72581
South African rand	21.82694-21.83800
UAE dirham	4.95650-4.95850

Dollar rates

Australia	1.41550-1.41630
Canada	1.39354-1.39363
Denmark	6.46740-6.46827
Euro	0.86500-0.86540
Hong Kong	7.84553-7.84591
Japan	157.50301-157.50999
Malaysia	4.08800-4.09400
Norway	9.49110-9.49380
Singapore	1.27843-1.27850
Sweden	9.47385-9.47653
Switzerland	0.80775-0.80779

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Gurkha who became his regiment's historian
Colonel Denis Wood
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Register

Obituaries

William Orbit

Record producer who gave fresh impetus to Madonna's career on Ray of Light and reimagined classical music with modern beats

By the late 1990s, Madonna's career was at a crossroads. Her record sales were in decline and tastes in pop music were in transition to a new style of dance music incorporating elements of electronica, trip hop, trance and techno.

Struggling to recreate herself in a rapidly changing marketplace, she had scrapped sessions with the R&B producer Babyface and was searching for a collaborator who could give her a new, cutting-edge sound. She found her saviour in William Orbit, a 40-year-old British producer who was a name on the underground dance scene but almost unknown outside it.

As Orbit sprinkled shimmering synths and skittering, propulsive beats over Madonna's songs, their 1998 collaboration *Ray of Light* sold 16 million copies worldwide and spawned hit singles in *Frozen, The Power of Good-Bye* and the title track.

It went on to win four Grammy awards and is regarded by many as the finest and most strikingly original album of Madonna's career. "William is a complete madman genius," she said. "I'd come to him with an idea, hum melodies or read lyrics, and then leave him alone in the laboratory."

She had been aware of Orbit's work from his remixes of her earlier hits *Justify My Love* and *Erotica* but they had never met until her manager sent him a first-class air ticket to New York in May 1997. In the gym of her Manhattan apartment, she played him demos of some songs and he offered her his views, although he admitted to being "a bit nervous because I'd been closeted away in my studio for a long time. I was excited just to be out — let alone with Madonna and in New York."

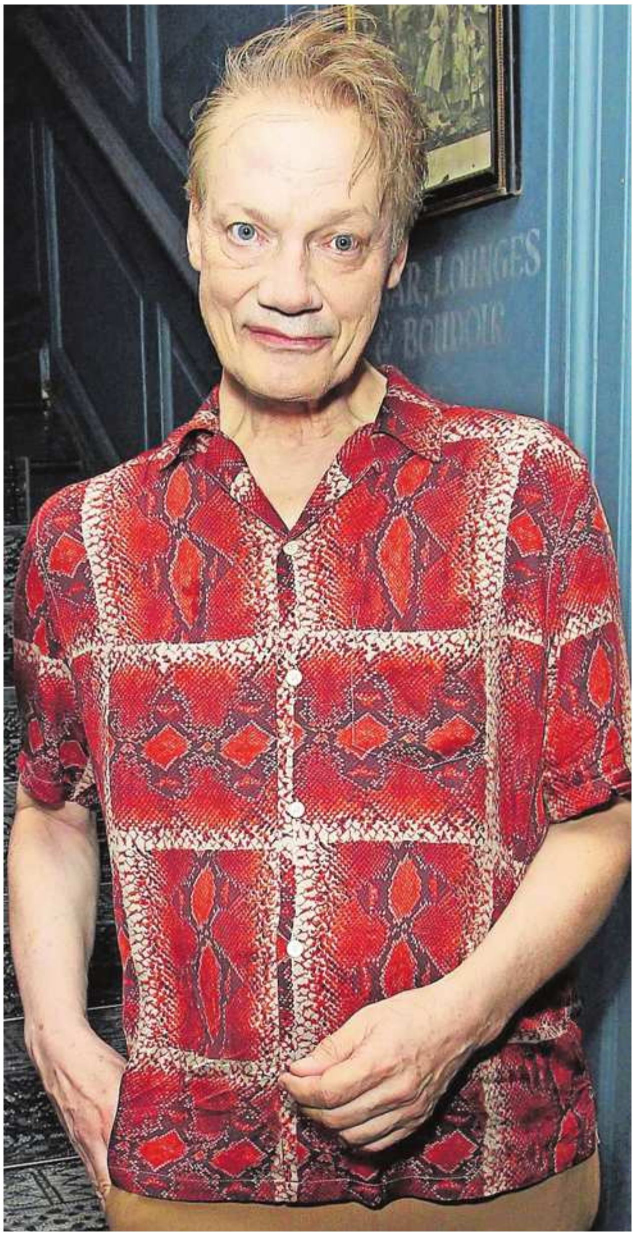
When she agreed to hire him, with what turned out to be epic understatement Orbit recalled thinking: "This is potentially going to be a really interesting project."

Over the next six months they co-wrote and produced an album that redefined Madonna and forged a unique marriage between experimental dance music and commercial pop. "Just hang in there, work on your stuff, get your chops together and eventually you get a stroke of luck," Orbit later reflected.

The 'queen of pop' called him a 'complete madman genius'

Their collaboration continued on three tracks on her follow-up album *Music* (2000), and on the hit singles *Beautiful Stranger*, written for the film *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, and her cover of *American Pie*, created for her own movie vehicle *The Next Best Thing*. A dozen years later Orbit returned to co-produce six of the songs on her 2012 album *MDNA*.

The success of *Ray of Light* made Orbit the flavour of the moment. Blur, who were keen to shed their cheery Britpop image and move in a more experimental direction, recruited Orbit to produce their sixth album, *13* (1999), which in effect announced the death of Britpop and the emergence of Damon Albarn as perhaps British rock's most imaginative auteur since David Bowie.



Orbit in 2022 to launch his album The Painter and, top, with Madonna at the 1999 Grammys where Ray of Light, which he had produced, won four awards

Others who courted his services included Mel C, Robbie Williams, Pink and All Saints, for whom he produced the chart-topping singles *Black Coffee* and *Pure Shores*.

The Madonna connection also gave him the commercial weight to release his own pet project. Although he had no formal training, he had grown up almost exclusively on a diet of classical music and in The Times in 2023 he cited a string quartet by Beethoven as his favourite piece of music.

The result was the 1999 album *Pieces in a Modern Style,* in which he reworked classical pieces by the likes of Vivaldi, Handel and Beethoven with a synthesised dancefloor backbeat. Purists hated it but the album reached No 2 in the UK chart and a dance remix of Orbit's version of Barber's Adagio for Strings became a hit single.

Awash with cash, he bought a desirable house in Bayswater and spent a fortune on renovating it. For some reason he then "couldn't bear to move in" so spent three years living in the Leonard, a boutique London hotel overlooking Hyde Park, where he set up a recording studio in his suite.

It was there that he recorded Bono's vocals for the U2 song *Electrical Storm*, which appeared on their compilation album *The Best of 1990-2000* (2002). He also produced the band's *The Hands That Built America*, the theme for Martin Scorsese's 2002 film *Gangs of New York*.

DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES

MADONNA
ray of light

Once he had tired of room service he spent several years living in Los Angeles and in later years maintained homes in London and Venice. He kept his private life out of the spotlight but it was known that he had a daughter from an early marriage that ended in divorce. During the 1990s he was in a short-lived relationship with the singer Beth Orton, whose debut album he produced. They remained friends and she guested on his most recent album, *The Painter* (2022).

He was born William Mark Wainwright in 1956 in Bow, east London, which qualified him as a genuine Cockney although there was no trace of it in his cultured tones. His father came from Sheffield and his mother, whose maiden name was Ferrari, was the daughter of Italian immigrants. They were "working class and poor", he recounted, but "struggled to be middle class" and became school teachers.

Growing up in north London, he was educated at Minchenden School in Southgate and recalled discovering an uncle's tape recorder when he was 14 as the turning point in his life. "It seemed like the most incredible thing in the world that you could take a sound and retain it and I became obsessed with recording," he said. His father had a battered old guitar and like the tape recorder he requisitioned it.

To his parents' disappointment, he left school at 16 and drifted through a succession of casual jobs including as a desk clerk at the Strand Palace Hotel.

There were more serious career attempts as a trainee draughtsman with an oilrig company and in the civil service but both were short-lived and left him unsatisfied. "What I knew is that I wanted to be creative," he recalled. "I just didn't know how and it burnt me up."

In Europe he busked on the streets and while in the Netherlands worked on a barge before returning to London and taking up squatter's rights in a caretaker's cottage in the grounds of an abandoned Victorian school where he lived on "a Mars bar and an acid tab a day". It was around this time the name Orbit was conferred on him by friends, ostensibly because of his interest in astronomy, although the acid may also have played its part in the soubriquet.

Experimenting with second-hand synthesisers, he formed a band called Torch Song, who in 1983 were signed by Miles Copeland, manager of the Police. "It felt like a turning point," he said. "I thought, 'If I'm smart about it, I'm never going to have to leave this wonderful place of being paid to make music.'"

He never did. Three albums with Torch Song were followed by further releases under the names Strange Cargo and Bassomatic. He also built his own home-made studio where he remixed tracks by the likes of Prince, Belinda Carlisle and, of course, Madonna.

His first chart success came co-writing and producing Harry Enfield's 1988 novelty hit *Loadsamoney (Doin' Up The House)* on which he used the pseudonym Billy Beat.

At some point he travelled by motorbike through Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia before the call came from Madonna. By the start of the new millennium, as one critic put it, he was so hot that "you couldn't move for Orbit's ambient-pop twinkliness".

He was summoned back by Madonna to work on *MDNA*, and the record was a critical and commercial disappointment. She had seemed more interested in "perfume ranges and teen fashion contests and other such endeavours", he complained, although he diplomatically added: "I will always love that woman. For real. She made my career." Yet they never spoke again and a later proposal that they should record another album together went unanswered.

Increasingly dispirited, in his sixties he threw himself into hedonistic drug abuse. "I'd always been quite drug-averse, then one day at a new year's party I thought I'd try some cocaine," he said. "Then I thought, 'Hmm, this is rather nice.'" In 2016 he suffered a psychotic episode that resulted in him being sectioned. By then he had almost given up music. "I'd become disillusioned with my ability to be relevant. I couldn't even look at my studio gear without feeling sick," he said.

After getting the drugs out of his system he made his way back to music, taking a course in how to use the latest edition of Pro Tools, the industry-standard digital recording software. "Bit by bit, I started to enjoy it again," he said, and the result was the 2022 album *The Painter*. The title referred to a new passion he took up late in life when, on a retreat in the Nevada desert, he chanced upon a flyer for "vino and Van Gogh" art classes. "You turn up, get drunk and mess around with cheap acrylics and I fell in love with it," he said.

The restlessness that meant he was seldom satisfied was central to his modus operandi. "You strive for excellence," he said. "You never get there, but you do some good work on the way."

William Orbit, musician and record producer, was born on December 15, 1956. He died of undisclosed causes on July 23, 2026, aged 69

Colonel Denis Wood

Officer who served with the Gurkhas in Malaya and Borneo and later preserved their legacy as a meticulous regimental historian

In August 1944, on reaching 17, Denis Wood volunteered for the army. He was "badged" for administrative convenience to the Queen's Royal Regiment, the senior English infantry regiment of the line, and placed in the Territorial Army Reserve until he was old enough for regular service at 17 and a half.

At this stage of the war, with the Allies pushing into Belgium, the expectation was that the fighting in Europe would be over in six to nine months. Priority in officer recruiting was shifting to the Far East, the planners expecting the fighting to continue there into 1946 and perhaps beyond. After attending an India Office selection board, Wood was offered a cadetship in the Indian Army (IA) — the army of British India.

In March 1945 he duly reported to No 63 Primary Training Wing at Victoria Barracks in Maidstone, Kent, joining the IA holding company. After an arm injury set him back two months, in October he embarked for India and the Bangalore Officer Training School. En route from Bombay he met an officer of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles) at a railway station. He was impressed and applied to join them, a seemingly haphazard method of officer recruiting, but as good as any in an army expanding from its prewar establishment of 200,000 to a planned figure of 2.5 million.

Commissions in the IA were normally subject to six months' probation in a British regiment. In April 1947, Wood was commissioned in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, his father's old regiment. Such was the need, however, that Wood was at once attached to the Sirmooris' first battalion (1/2GR) as a company officer, initially in Bombay and then Poona in the Deccan.

His brief encounter at the station would prove doubly fortunate. After independence and the partition of India in August 1947, the ten regiments of Gurkhas, swollen to 40 battalions during the war, had to be divided between the British Army and the army of newly independent India. 2GR was one of the four regiments (each of two battalions) to join the British establishment. This therefore gave Wood an extension of service, whereas those in regiments allocated to India had to find a billet elsewhere. Wood was posted as assistant recruiting officer to Kunraghat and Darjeeling near the border with Nepal, where he was able to polish his Gurkhali, praised years later as the best in 2GR. In 1949, he rejoined 1/2GR in Malaya as the communist insurgency erupted.

He applied to join the Gurkhas after meeting an officer at the station

His time as a temporary officer was coming to an end, however, and there was no vacancy for a regular commission in 2GR. Instead, he was attached for a few months to a Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) transport company in Perak State, Malaya, before returning to England to attend the RASC regular officers' course. After 1/2GR, it must have seemed a considerable comedown. Yet no sooner had he begun the course than a vacancy arose in his former battalion. He immediately rejoined them, in Johor State, Malaya, and shortly afterwards became adjutant, for which in 1953 he was mentioned in dispatches, an unusual accolade for a regimental staff officer.

Wood signed up for the army aged 17

Over the next two years during the Malayan Emergency he commanded two rifle companies and the administrative company, surviving a helicopter crash on a jungle reconnaissance, all before he was 28, early command being one of the attractions of Gurkha service.

Denis Roland Wood was born in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1927, where his father, Roland, was serving at the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers' depot. He was educated first at nearby Dame Allan's School, before boarding at St Anne's, Windermere, unusually for the time a mixed school. In 1953 he married Bridget Christina (Chris) Flynn, whom he had first met in Singapore where she was a nursing sister in Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. She died in 2011. Their daughter, Carolyn, survives him.

Wood was not much taller than his Gurkhas, compact of build and no athlete, but his intellectual powers were formidable nevertheless, and his attention to detail meticulous. He passed the entrance examination to the staff college at Camberley with evident ease. An appointment on the intelligence staff at the War Office followed. In 1964 he returned to 1/2GR in Hong Kong as second-in-command, deploying with them on three six-month operational tours in Borneo during the Confrontation, the Indonesian president Sukarno's campaign to break up the new federation of Malaysia.

Wood then returned to the staff college to teach, before in 1968 assuming command of 1/2GR in Brunei. As a deterrence force against any further attempts to depose the sultan, it was crucial to British interests, but Brunei was not a place for a commanding officer to shine.

After his two years there, Wood joined Far East Command headquarters in Singapore as chief of the operations and plans staff. It was a demanding job, not least because of the withdrawal of British forces from Singapore in 1971.

A further teaching job followed, at the then Joint Services Staff College, and then promotion to full colonel on the defence intelligence staff in Whitehall. Even though his responsibilities covered the Far East, the job did not please him, though hardly surprisingly as Britain had withdrawn from east of Suez, except Hong Kong whose time was approaching too. In October 1973 he retired from the army to work for a life insurance and pensions company, and bought a house in Islington.

He at once turned his love of Gurkha history, his formidable organisational skills and his personal wealth to the project that stands in part as his memorial, as well as to his co-collaborator and fellow "Sirmoori" Field Marshal Sir John Chapple (obituary, March 26, 2022) — the Gurkha Museum in the former Peninsula Barracks, Winchester, now an upmarket residential square but still the spiritual home of rifle regiments. He was chairman of the trustees from 1978 to 2003, for which he was latterly appointed MBE.

Having earlier published a study of the insignia of his father's old regiment, in 2003 he published the fourth volume of the history of 2GR, covering the postwar years. A tireless and assiduous historian of regimental arcana, he had also compiled a compendium of the service details of 1,447 Sirmoori officers who had served since the regiment's raising in 1815.

It was ironic that his own early service had been in the fighting to preserve empire, and the rest of it in empire's long, withdrawing roar. He was one of the last surviving British Indian Army officers.

Colonel Denis Wood MBE, Gurkha officer, was born on August 19, 1927. He died on June 22, 2026, aged 98

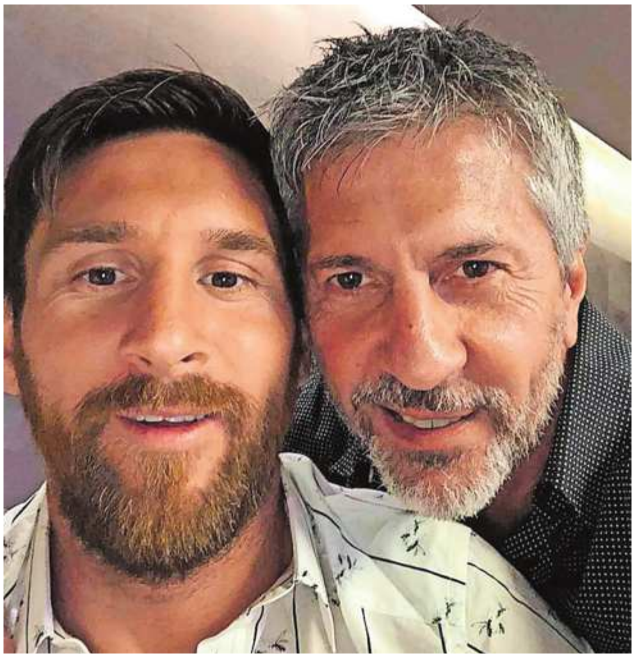
Jorge Messi

Father and agent of the Argentinian footballer Lionel Messi who guided his son's journey to becoming the best player in the world

Even the best in the world have to suffer to realise their dreams. Jorge Messi had uprooted his 13-year-old son Lionel from Argentina to Barcelona so that the child could start his journey towards becoming arguably the greatest who ever played the beautiful game.

Both father and son were so homesick that they would cry themselves to sleep at night. "Sometimes I would lock myself in my room to cry when we arrived in Barcelona, or my dad would do the same without me seeing him, or thinking I didn't see him," Lionel Messi recalled in a 2007 interview with Radio del Plata. "We pretended we were both OK, but we weren't. My dad even asked me what I wanted to do when we were feeling down, if I wanted to stay or go back, and I wanted to stay, and he stayed with me."

The child dazzled with his ball skills and scored five goals in the trial match that took place in the Spanish city in September 2000. The Barcelona first-team director, Carles Rexach, recalled wanting to sign him after two minutes. But Lionel was very small for his age owing to growth hormone deficiency and Jorge had struggled to find the $900 a month required for his son's treatment. There were fears that Lionel would grow no taller than 4ft 7in and the Barcelona board viewed an investment in a 13-year-old "pipsqueak" as too risky. In any case, Jorge's gambit to turn up in Barcelona with his tiny son was seen as highly irregular; normally Spanish clubs waited until South American players had proved their worth as professionals in their home countries before signing them.


Messi remained his son's closest confidant while he became a global celebrity

The impasse was broken when Jorge issued an ultimatum to the club to the effect of "make a decision or we go home". Taking matters into his own hands, Rexach rapidly sketched out a contract on a paper napkin in a restaurant. The deal was done and for a time the whole Messi family moved into an apartment near the club's Camp Nou stadium.

From that point on Jorge rarely left his son's side, negotiating all his contracts, first with Barcelona and later his moves to Paris Saint-Germain and Inter Miami. He also negotiated the use of Messi's image rights and directed his earnings into various property, hotel and restaurant investments, managing assets for his son that this year were estimated by Bloomberg to have surpassed $1 billion.

Jorge Messi was born in the Argentinian city of Rosario in 1958 into a family with Italian and Spanish heritage. He might have become a professional footballer himself having played as a midfielder for Newell's Old Boys youth team, but was called up for military service and never returned. Having married Celia Cuccittini in 1978, he abandoned the precarious dream of footballing stardom and would go on to forge a career as a chemical technician. He later managed the Acindar steelworks, while his wife worked in a magnet factory.

Lionel, their third child, who was born in 1987 and Jorge named after Lionel Richie, started playing football aged four when he joined a neighbourhood team called Abanderado Grandoli, who were coached by his father. On Lionel's first day at school, a teacher blocked him from taking part in a playground kickabout because he was so tiny, but he was soon dribbling around everyone. Nicknamed "the flea" by his elder brother Rodrigo, seven-year-old Lionel signed for his father's old team Newell's Old Boys. And if Jorge was living out a vicarious dream through his son, he insisted he did not push Lionel against his will, as has been written. "[Lionel] always had a passion for the sport." Over the next six years little Lionel scored more than 500 goals in a boys' team that became known as the "Machine of '87" after the year of most of the players' birth.

A quiet figure, Jorge eschewed publicity. Lionel recalled in 2019: "My old man would get up at four in the morning and get back home at nine at night for dinner. He never scolded me. I enjoyed him so much, I would wait for him just to hug him."

Lionel would make his first-team debut for Barcelona aged 17 in 2004. Thereafter, managing his brand was a family affair. Jorge's eldest son, Rodrigo, manages Lionel's advertising and image rights contracts and also oversees the Leo Messi Foundation. His second son, Matías, manages the foundation's football and community projects in Argentina and abroad. Jorge's fourth child, María Sol, runs her own fashion brand and is heavily involved in Lionel's public relations operation.

In 2013 father and son were charged with tax evasion totalling €4.1 million in relation to sponsorship earnings that were allegedly funnelled into offshore companies in Uruguay, Switzerland and Belize between 2007 and 2009. They were found guilty in 2016, given suspended 21-month prison sentences and ordered to pay substantial fines. Lionel told the judge: "I just played football. I signed the contracts because I trusted my dad and the lawyers." Jorge remained his son's closest confidant as the player's annual earnings reached more than €100 million in 2018 and the little maestro lifted the World Cup for Argentina in 2022.

During Argentina's first game of this summer's World Cup against Algeria, Messi was visibly emotional after scoring the first goal, but would not elaborate about the reasons why. The illness of his father, who was unable to attend the tournament, was widely thought to be the reason. Jorge is survived by his wife and four children.

In honour of Messi Sr, there was a minute's silence before Inter Miami's game against Monterrey on Saturday, while the players wore black armbands. Their celebrated No 10 was absent.

Jorge Messi, father and agent of Lionel Messi, was born on April 24, 1958. He died after a long illness on August 8, 2026, aged 68

obituaries@thetimes.co.uk

The Sovereign's Parade

General Sir "Roly" Walker KCB DSO, Chief of the General Staff, represented His Majesty the King at the Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on August 7, 2026.

The Sword of Honour was awarded to Senior Under Officer, William RF Stubbs who is to commission into the Household Cavalry Regiment Lifeguards (HCR (LG)).

The King's Medal was awarded to Officer Cadet Joshua DM-K Lee, who is to commission into the Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR).

The International Sword was awarded to JUO A Bakira from Uganda, and the International Award was awarded to Officer Cadet M Finke from the Armed Forces of Germany.

The following have been granted commissions in the Regiments and Corps shown, having successfully completed Commissioning Course No: 253.

JUO Adeyeye, TOA, R ANGLIAN; OCdt Ali, TGH, COLDM GDS; OCdt Amphlett, KAR, AGC(ETS); OCdt Backhouse, TG, SCOTS DG; OCdt Barbour-Smith, RM, R WELSH; OCdt Barclay, SD, RLC; OCdt Barker, TL, R SIGNALS; OCdt Beckett, OJ, REME; OCdt Bedford, BEM, REME; OCdt Bell, WF, AAC (Pilot); JUO Bence-Trower, HN, SG; OCdt Betteridge, MFE, R SIGNALS; OCdt Biddulph, HP, KRH; OCdt Blackmore, EJ, R ANGLIAN; OCdt Bollard, SN, PARA; OCdt Boot, CD, R SIGNALS; JUO Botham, GGF, RE; OCdt Bowman, WGA, SCOTS; OCdt Boyer, AC, RIFLES; JUO Brennan, JD, RGR; OCdt Brophy, FT, RE; OCdt Buchanan, WE, SCOTS DG; OCdt Burgoine-Roth, MSC, RLC; JUO Carroll, JC, R IRISH; OCdt Cartwright, PRS, SCOTS; OCdt Chevallier Guild, ECT, HCR (LG); OCdt Clark, WA, R SIGNALS; OCdt Clarke, CTB, PWRR; OCdt Clayton, OJG, QRH; OCdt Coe, AJ, COLDM GDS; OCdt Coleman, OR, PARA; OCdt Connolly-Connell, AD, R SIGNALS; OCdt Cooper, HJ, REME; JUO Coughlan, KP, RTR; OCdt Crabtree, LO, AGC(ETS); OCdt Cross, HD, RLC; OCdt Dadley, BA, RLC; OCdt Dalton, TR, AGC(RMP); OCdt Daniels, RJC, SG; OCdt Darling, WJ, REME; OCdt Davidson, TJ, R IRISH; OCdt De Boehmler, WHM, WG; OCdt De Gale, LC, RE; OCdt Dennis, TJ, RE; OCdt Dennis, GG, RA; OCdt Denvir, MAJ, RIFLES; OCdt Duffield, JPT, SG; OCdt Dunning, WM, RE; OCdt Dyke, MJ, RA; OCdt Edmunds, NF, RA; OCdt Elviss, SM, PARA; OCdt Elwood, JW, RL; OCdt Elwood, BA, RIFLES; OCdt Fazel, S, R SIGNALS; OCdt Finch, W.P., REME; OCdt Findlay, CD, RE; OCdt Finn-Kelcey, M, RDG; OCdt Fitz-Gerald, WAP, IG; OCdt Fogg, AE, RLC; OCdt Foreman, JR, REME; OCdt Forster, DS, R SIGNALS; OCdt Fowler, SL, RIFLES; OCdt Frazer, GF, SCOTS; OCdt Gaynor, JM, RA; OCdt Gilbert, MJ, INT CORPS; JUO Gilbertson, LC, R ANGLIAN; OCdt Grant, HAB, IG; OCdt Groslin, OGM, RA; OCdt Harding, BC, R SIGNALS; OCdt Harris, OJ, REME; OCdt Harte, AAG, SCOTS; OCdt Haylett, JM, MERCIAN; OCdt Henderson, HM, PARA; OCdt Henry, GP, RAMS(M); OCdt Henshaw, MA, RA; OCdt Heybourne, JC, RA; OCdt Hill, LJ, LANCS; OCdt Hoffman, SCB, AGC(SPS); OCdt Issa, YIM, INT CORPS; OCdt Jack, FHA, RDG; OCdt James, SP, PWRR; OCdt Jennings, EB, QDG; OCdt Johnson, HA, RE; OCdt Jones, JA, RLC; OCdt Joyce, RH, SCOTS DG; OCdt Judd, SL, AGC(ETS); OCdt Kamyab, SN, RA; OCdt Kelly, ML, AAC (Pilot); OCdt Kennedy, OPJ, RG; OCdt Keogh, SJ, RE; OCdt Kilgour, RA, RE; OCdt Lake Coghlan, GJ, RLC; OCdt Lee, JDM-K, RGR; OCdt Lee, FC, KRH; OCdt Lester, ABM, RGR; OCdt Li, YER, RAMS(M); OCdt Lindsay, CR, RLC; OCdt Littlewood, WI, RA; OCdt Livesey, JK, PWRR; OCdt Lock, JH, RA; OCdt Loder, EA, IG; OCdt Louch, TJ, RRF; OCdt Macaulay, HB, PARA; OCdt Macdonald, IM, AGC(ETS); OCdt Mackle, E, AGC(RMP); OCdt Mackman, JRK, RE; JUO Makepeace, DRW, RIFLES; OCdt Mangles, JSG, LD; OCdt Mason-Phelps, KD, QRH; OCdt Massey, DJ, REME; OCdt Matthews, DJ, RE; OCdt Mcardle, JMC, INT CORPS; OCdt Mcarthur, GW, RE; OCdt Mckenna, TO, RE; OCdt Meenan, AM, AAC (ASO); OCdt Melmoth, ST, RE; OCdt Mendonca, CG, R SIGNALS; OCdt Millsop, E, RLC; OCdt Milner, JJ, RLC; OCdt Mitchell, CR, RLC; OCdt Moloney, OED, REME; OCdt Moore, AT, R SIGNALS; OCdt Moss Prout, FA, REME; OCdt Murdoch, KEM, HCR (RHG/D); OCdt Murrin, NI, INT CORPS; OCdt Musgrave, CJ, AAC (Pilot); OCdt Naylor, AS, REME; OCdt Neusinger, EF, RE; OCdt Newton, OJ, RLC; OCdt North, A.W., AGC(RMP); JUO North, B.E.M, R ANGLIAN; OCdt O'neil Smith, AP, RA; OCdt Parkes, WGM, RE; OCdt Parmar, AA, RIFLES; OCdt Paterson, AJB, AGC(RMP); OCdt Pattenden, MA, RA; OCdt Piercy, JH, RE; OCdt Pirzada, GR, AGC(ETS); OCdt Preston, HTE, RA; OCdt Price, JJS, RIFLES; OCdt Pushman, AV, RA; OCdt Pym, SMR, IG; OCdt Reimus, AW, AGC(RMP); JUO Richardson, JT, RYORKS; OCdt Robinson, JP, RRF; OCdt Rumball, WAH, RA; OCdt Seaton, JK, RAMS(M); OCdt Shapland, AJ, AAC (Pilot); OCdt Short, ML, RA; OCdt Simmonds, CH, RE; OCdt Simpson, RW, RLC; OCdt Sims, EB, REME; OCdt Smeeton, AEK, RLC; OCdt Smith, PJ, RLC; OCdt Smith, B.J., RA; OCdt Smith, MJH, SG; OCdt Smyth, AM, INT CORPS; OCdt Spalton, JF, AAC (Pilot); OCdt Sparkes, AGC, AAC (ASO); OCdt Stead, JH, RLC; OCdt Stephens, AP, R SIGNALS; OCdt Stephenson, HGI, LANCS; OCdt Stingone, LJ, R SIGNALS; OCdt Stott, C.J, REME; OCdt Strong, TW, WG; OCdt Stuart, JGO, SCOTS; SUO Stubbs, WRF, HCR (LG); OCdt Taylerson, ERR, RLC; OCdt Taylor, AR, INT CORPS; JUO Teasdale, NG, INT CORPS; OCdt Thomas, W, INT CORPS; OCdt Thomas-Connolly, BS, SCOTS DG; OCdt Thomson, HB, RA; JUO Thorne, TJA, RE; JUO Ticehurst, JM, PARA; OCdt Trebilcock, MD, RLC; OCdt Trotman, RJ, R SIGNALS; OCdt Turner, HPB, R SIGNALS; OCdt Twiggs, WK, AGC(SPS); OCdt Vickerman, CJ, RE; OCdt Vyse, HC, RYORKS; OCdt Walwyn, AAB, SCOTS; OCdt Warhurst, EJ, RE; OCdt Webb, CJA, R SIGNALS; JUO Welch, CJ, RA; OCdt Welsh, OP, R IRISH; OCdt Wesbroom-Warr, C.E, RA; OCdt White, S.D, RE; JUO Whitehead, GAD, IG; OCdt Whittaker, RJ, RA; OCdt Whitworth, HW, RYORKS; OCdt Wilkins, MSP, AGC(RMP); OCdt Wilkinson, AL, RE; OCdt Williams, CFJ, RLC; OCdt Williams, TVC, SCOTS; OCdt Williams, SD, GREN GDS; OCdt Willumsen, DJ, R SIGNALS; OCdt Wright, GCS, INT CORPS.

The following International Officer Cadets also passed out with a view to being commissioned into the Armed Forces of their countries:

OCdt A Hovsepyan, Armenia; OCdt SMAI Al Khalifa, Bahrain; OCdt SMAM Al Khalifa, Bahrain; OCdt SMFMK Al Khalifa, Bahrain; OCdt NAA Al Ajman, Bahrain; OCdt MAI Al-Buainain, Bahrain; OCdt AR Lamiz, Bangladesh; OCdt P Muthsokchhorpone, Cambodia; OCdt SMH Koffi, Cote D'Ivoire; OCdt SMMME Abdelrahman, Egypt; OCdt R Nokelainen, Finland; OCdt TAR Lucena-Serrano, France; OCdt O Touray, The Gambia; OCdt A Teschke, Germany; JUO M Finke, Germany; OCdt A Adams, Ghana; OCdt JA Tampubolon, Indonesia; OCdt MGM Qalwawls, Iraq; OCdt M Williams, Jamacia; OCdt ZTK Alabdullah, Jordan; OCdt I Lenkume, Kenya; OCdt K Derguti, Kosovo; OCdt MF Al Omar, Kuwait; OCdt MA Ibrahim, Maldives; OCdt R Bugeja, Malta; OCdt B-E Battumur, Mongolia; OCdt E Kurtanovic, Montenegro; OCdt H Nepali, Nepal; OCdt JT Adekunle, Nigeria; OCdt MBM Al-Azri, Oman; OCdt FMM Al-Maashani, Oman; OCdt SBF Khammash, Palestine; OCdt F Kargbo, Sierra Leone; OCdt MFM Al Hababi, UAE; OCdt MMR Al Mualla, UAE; OCdt MAS AlNeyadi, UAE; JUO A Bakira, Uganda; OCdt RK Kainerugaba, Uganda; OCdt P Yeromin, Ukraine; OCdt M Nicol, USA.

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MAY my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141.2 (NIV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Deaths

STUBBS Michael Lawrence Edward died peacefully on 22nd June 2026 at home, Fourways Residential Care, Sidmouth, Devon. Private family service held in July 2026. Born in Co Waterford in 1938, much loved. Survived by three children, Catherine, Elizabeth and William.

WATTS Christopher John died suddenly on 25th July. He will be much missed. Cremation will be held at Romsey Crematorium on 27th August at 3.30pm. No flowers. Donations through AH Cheater, Romsey, to the Salvation Army.

There is no Court Circular for August 8 and 9, 2026.

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES

To place notices for these sections please call 020 7782 7553

Notices are subject to confirmation and should be received by 11.30am three days prior to insertion

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'It felt like I was floating on a cloud'

Jodi Shurey, 30, and Dan Tostevin, 31, were married on October 27, 2024, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. They featured in The Times on Saturday April 12, 2025

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INTERNATIONAL BIDDING NOTICE

INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONIC AUCTION – PEI Nº. 22/2026

Process Nº. 00054-00055663/2026-10. Price Registration through an International Electronic Auction for the future acquisition of brand-new logistics support vehicles, zero kilometer, including supply and delivery, with the Military Police of the Federal District (PMDF) acting as the Managing Agency, and the Civil Police of the State of Roraima (PCRR), the Civil Police of the Federal District (PCDF), the Military Police Secretariat of the State of Rio de Janeiro (SEPM/RJ), and the State Public Security Fund of the State of Roraima (FESP/RR) acting as Participating Agencies, in accordance with the conditions and requirements established in the Notice and its attachments. Estimated Cost: R$ 164,053,704.54 (one hundred sixty-four million, fifty-three thousand, seven hundred four Reals and fifty-four cents). Evaluation Criteria: Lowest price per item. Closing date for receipt of proposals: August 26, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. (GMT-3 – Brasília/DF time). A copy of the Notice may be found on the websites: www.gov.br/compras and portal.pm.df.gov.br. UASG: 926016. Information: +55 (61) 3190-5557 or by e-mail: dalf.licitacao@pm.df.gov.br.

Brasília/DF, July 20, 2026

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MARCH 2027

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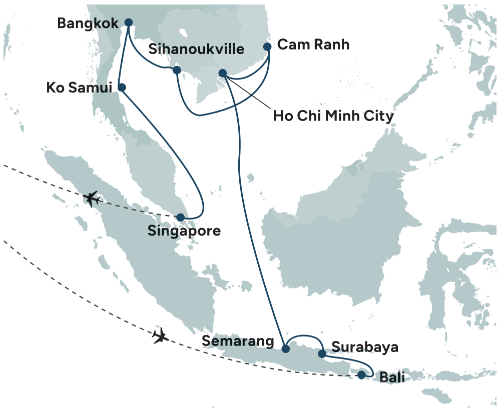
Sun 21	**Bali (Celukan Bawang), Indonesia**
Mon 22	**Surabaya, Indonesia**
Tue 23	**Semarang, Java, Indonesia**
Fri 26 - Sat 27	**Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam** (arrive pm – overnight) Discover the rich heritage of former Saigon and the rural Mekong Delta. See the city's lovely pagodas, colonial architecture and broad boulevards; ride a local pedicab through the bustling streets; visit the vibrant markets, Chinatown and even the fascinating Cu Chi tunnels
Sun 28	**Cam Ranh, Vietnam**
Tue 30	**Sihanoukville, Cambodia**
Wed 31	**Bangkok (from Laem Chabang), Thailand** (overnight)

APRIL 2027

Thu 1	**Bangkok (from Laem Chabang), Thailand**
Fri 2	**Ko Samui, Thailand**
Sun 4	**Singapore** (overnight)
Mon 5	**Singapore** Disembark and transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to London
Tue 6	**Arrive in London**

Dates not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea



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Today A dry and warm day for most with plenty of sunshine and one or two showers. Max 28C (82F), min 7C (45F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder
*=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C		Rain mm	Sun hr*
	midday yesterday		24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	
Aberdeen	18	D	2.6	4.4
Aberporth	19	PC	0.0	10.4
Anglesey	20	PC	0.0	13.0
Aviemore	16	R	0.2	0.4
Barnstaple	24	S	0.0	**
Bedford	28	S	0.0	**
Belfast	16	C	6.0	0.1
Birmingham	26	PC	0.0	**
Bournemouth	30	S	0.0	11.2
Bridlington	27	PC	0.0	**
Bristol	27	S	0.0	8.5
Camborne	21	PC	0.0	9.7
Cardiff	23	PC	0.2	8.7
Edinburgh	14	D	0.6	4.5
Eskdalemuir	14	R	5.6	0.7
Glasgow	15	C	11.0	1.7
Hereford	27	S	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	25	C	0.0	10.6
Ipswich	28	PC	0.0	11.6
Isle of Man	17	R	5.8	10.3
Isle of Wight	27	S	0.0	**
Jersey	21	S	0.0	11.1
Keswick	18	C	1.6	**
Kinloss	18	**	0.0	0.9
Leeds	20	C	0.0	**
Lerwick	13	C	5.4	0.0
Leuchars	17	C	0.4	2.4
Lincoln	26	S	0.0	12.0
Liverpool	21	C	0.0	**
London	29	C	0.0	12.3
Lyneham	27	S	0.0	9.3
Manchester	26	C	0.0	10.6
Margate	25	PC	0.0	12.5
Milford Haven	23	S	0.0	**
Newcastle	20	PC	0.4	**
Nottingham	25	S	0.0	11.0
Orkney	16	C	5.0	**
Oxford	28	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	24	S	0.0	**
Portland	23	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	22	M	0.0	**
Shoreham	30	C	0.0	12.3
Shrewsbury	25	PC	0.0	10.1
Snowdonia	19	PC	0.0	**
Southend	24	C	0.0	12.1
South Uist	15	PC	3.2	**
Stornoway	16	C	3.4	0.6
Tiree	16	B	9.8	0.0
Whitehaven	16	R	0.0	5.9
Wick	**	C	0.0	**
Yeovilton	28	S	0.0	9.7

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	34	S	Madeira	26	PC
Amsterdam	29	S	Madrid	32	S
Athens	32	PC	Malaga	27	S
Auckland	**	**	Mallorca	39	S
Bahrain	38	S	Malta	34	PC
Bangkok	31	B	Melbourne	11	B
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	22	C
Barcelona	34	S	Miami	33	B
Beijing	**	**	Milan	34	S
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	29	PC
Belgrade	30	S	Montreal	27	C
Berlin	29	S	Moscow	20	B
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	31	**
Bordeaux	32	PC	Munich	32	S
Brussels	29	S	Nairobi	21	B
Bucharest	27	S	Naples	34	S
Budapest	29	S	New Orleans	32	PC
Buenos Aires	**	**	New York	31	PC
Cairo	33	S	Nice	32	PC
Calcutta	31	**	Nicosia	34	S
Canberra	7	SH	Oslo	19	PC
Cape Town	14	PC	Paris	27	S
Chicago	28	PC	Perth	16	PC
Copenhagen	22	PC	Prague	27	S
Corfu	37	PC	Reykjavik	13	PC
Delhi	34	**	Riga	22	PC
Dubai	44	S	Rio de Janeiro	26	B
Dublin	19	PC	Riyadh	45	PC
Faro	25	S	Rome	33	S
Florence	37	PC	San Francisco	19	PC
Frankfurt	32	S	Santiago	11	PC
Geneva	28	B	São Paulo	25	PC
Gibraltar	32	S	Seoul	31	S
Helsinki	22	PC	Seychelles	27	PC
Hong Kong	34	PC	Singapore	31	B
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	21	B
Istanbul	25	SH	Stockholm	21	S
Jerusalem	33	PC	Sydney	18	S
Johannesburg	18	S	Tel Aviv	33	PC
Kuala Lumpur	32	PC	Tenerife	30	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	31	PC
Lanzarote	30	PC	Vancouver	21	PC
Las Palmas	29	PC	Venice	**	**
Lima	21	M	Vienna	29	S
Lisbon	28	PC	Warsaw	23	S
Los Angeles	26	PC	Washington	32	B
Luxor	38	S	Zurich	**	**

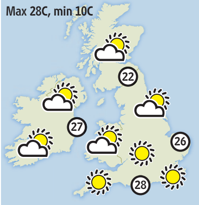
Five days ahead

Patchy cloud and a few spots of rain across Ireland and Scotland, dry and hot elsewhere

Tomorrow

Dry and hot with the best of the sunshine in southern Britain through the afternoon.

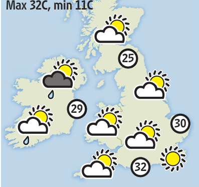
Max 28C, min 10C



Wednesday

A day of bright periods and one or two spots of rain across Ireland. Dry, sunny and hot in England, Wales and Scotland.

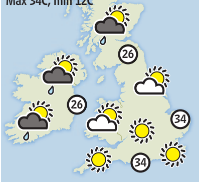
Max 32C, min 11C



Thursday

Patchy cloud and showery outbreaks of rain across Scotland and Ireland. Dry and very hot with sunny spells elsewhere.

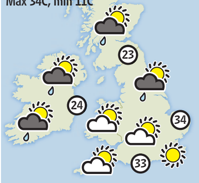
Max 34C, min 12C



Friday

Staying dry and hot in southern England and Wales. Bright intervals and outbreaks of rain elsewhere, heaviest in western Ireland.

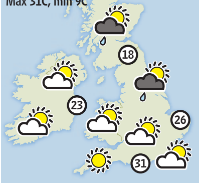
Max 34C, min 11C



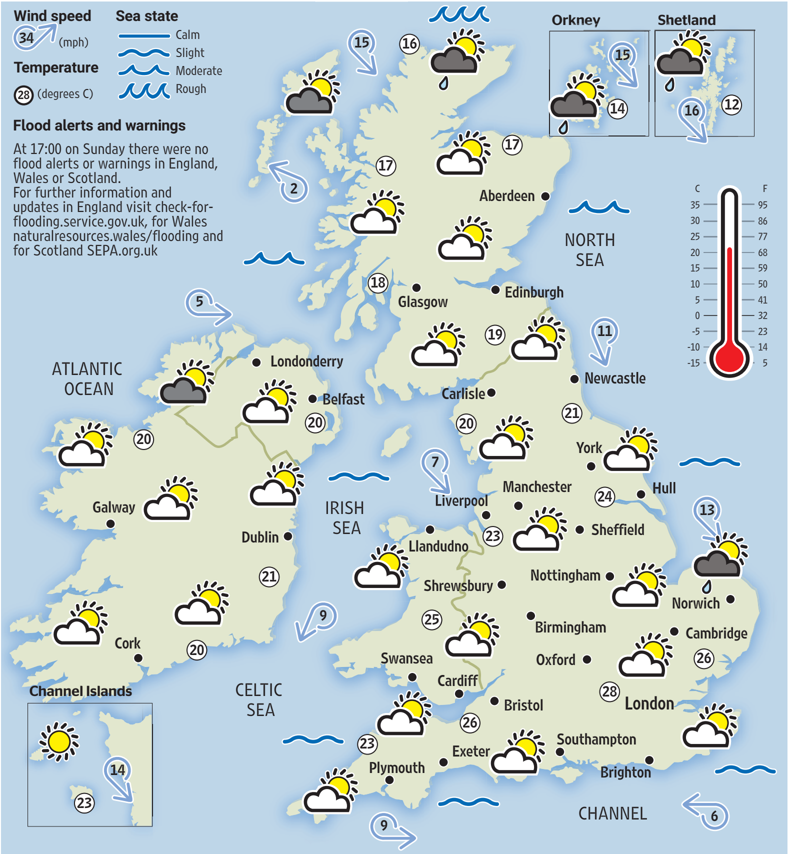
Saturday

A day of bright spells and scattered showers across Scotland and northern England. Dry elsewhere with sunny spells.

Max 31C, min 9C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest



Flood alerts and warnings

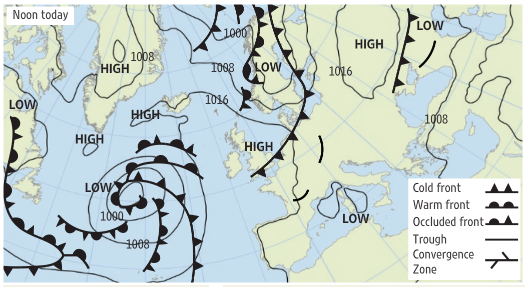
At 17:00 on Sunday there were no flood alerts or warnings in England, Wales or Scotland.
For further information and updates in England visit check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: Dry for most with long sunny spells and the odd shower in northern and eastern Britain.
Republic of Ireland, N Ireland: Early mist, fog and low cloud clearing to leave a dry day with a mixture of sunny spells and patchy cloud. Light and variable winds, perhaps moderate along the coast later. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 10C (50F).
NW Scotland, NE Scotland, N Isles, Moray Firth: Dry with sunny intervals through the morning. Bright periods and a few spots of light rain or drizzle by the afternoon, most widespread in the Northern Isles. Light to moderate west to northwesterly winds, fresh in the far north at first. Maximum 17C (63F), minimum 7C (45F).
Edinburgh and Dundee, Cen Highland, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Argyll, Borders, SW Scotland, NE Eng: A dry day with the best of the sunshine in the morning. Light to moderate west to northwesterly winds. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 8C (46F).
Lake District, Cen N Eng, NW Eng, IoM, E Eng, W Mids, Wales: Dry and warm with sunshine turning increasingly hazy later. Light to moderate north to northwesterly winds. Maximum 25C (77F), minimum 9C (48F).
London, E Anglia, E Mids, Cen S Eng, SE Eng, SW Eng, Channel Is: A largely dry and hot day with sunny spells and the odd isolated shower in eastern Norfolk. Light to moderate north to northwesterly winds. Maximum 28C (82F), minimum 10C (50F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	--:--	--	12:18	3.8
Avonmouth	05:38	10.7	18:10	11.3
Belfast	09:46	3.1	22:04	3.3
Cardiff	05:27	10.1	17:58	10.6
Devonport	04:09	4.6	16:37	4.9
Dover	09:54	5.8	22:26	6.0
Dublin	10:16	3.7	22:37	3.9
Falmouth	03:42	4.3	16:11	4.7
Greenock	11:20	2.9	23:26	3.1
Harwich	10:11	3.4	22:44	3.6
Holyhead	09:05	4.9	21:30	5.2
Hull	04:38	6.3	17:17	6.6
Leith	--:--	--	13:25	5.0
Liverpool	09:45	8.2	22:14	8.6
London Bridge	--:--	--	12:24	6.0
Lowestoft	07:48	2.3	20:36	2.4
Milford Haven	04:40	5.9	17:12	6.2
Morecambe	09:57	8.1	22:26	8.5
Newhaven	09:44	5.8	22:09	6.0
Newquay	03:35	5.7	16:06	6.1
Oban	05:04	3.3	17:17	3.5
Penzance	03:07	4.6	15:39	4.9
Portsmouth	10:11	4.2	22:29	4.4
Shoreham	10:00	5.4	22:24	5.6
Southampton	09:12	4.0	21:33	4.2
Swansea	04:46	7.9	17:18	8.3
Tees	01:54	4.8	14:33	5.0
Weymouth	05:09	1.5	17:34	1.8



Synoptic situation

A cold front associated with a low-pressure system over Scandinavia will bring some patchy cloud over southern England and Wales through the morning with a chance of the odd isolated shower in East Anglia. High pressure will lead to a mainly dry day elsewhere with plenty of sunshine and one or two spots of drizzle in northern Scotland.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Charlwood, Surrey, 32.1C
Coldest: Cairngorm, 4.1C
Wettest: Achnagart, 32.8mm
Sunniest: Leeming, North Yorkshire, 13.7hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.38
Sun sets: 20.32
Moon rises: 01.55
Moon sets: 19.40
New moon: August 12

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:32-04:57
Belfast	21:37-05:22
Birmingham	21:13-05:13
Cardiff	21:15-05:22
Exeter	21:14-05:26
Glasgow	21:35-05:11
Liverpool	21:21-05:15
London	21:03-05:10
Manchester	21:18-05:12
Newcastle	21:21-05:04
Norwich	21:01-05:00
Penzance	21:20-05:35
Sheffield	21:14-05:09

Weather Eye
Paul Simons

Prayers for rain have gone unanswered in the drought-stricken areas of Britain, even though downpours have battered western and northern parts of Scotland. But there is nothing new about trying to conjure up wet weather.

For a long time it was believed that loud noises could set off rain. During the American Civil War cannon fire was thought to cause downpours in the days after a battle, as the noise of the explosions was believed to agitate clouds. In 1891, the US government funded a study to test whether dynamite could trigger rain. Among the researchers was a meteorologist, George Curtis, although he faced a great deal of scepticism from others in his field.

Indeed, the tests produced hardly any rain and Curtis left. But another member of the team was Robert Dyrenforth, a lawyer whose interest in rainmaking using explosions came from patents he had studied. Dyrenforth and the rest of the team went on to, they claimed, successfully create rain in a number of tests around southwest America, although the experiments were done during the area's rainy season so were mostly dismissed by the scientific community.

A decade later another American, Charles Hatfield, claimed he could conjure rain using a special smoke he had invented, belched out from 20ft-tall chimneys. Gold miners around Klondike in northwestern Canada hired him to make rain but after two months his efforts met with little success and the operation was shut down. Despite this setback, in 1915 San Diego hired Hatfield to break a long-running drought. But after starting up his smoke operation, a deluge of rain flooded streets, homes and farms, and roads and railways were washed away. Worst of all, a dam broke when it overfilled with water and an estimated 20 people were killed. Furious residents sued the city, who demanded that Hatfield take responsibility for the deluge and pay the damage costs, but eventually a court ruled that the rain was an act of God and Hatfield was exonerated.

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*Save up to 15% applies to select tour bookings made by September 30, 2026 and cannot be applied retrospectively to bookings already confirmed. Offer applies to select tours only and cannot be combined with any other offer. Exclusions apply. Prices shown include discount. Single supplements apply. Prices correct at time of print. Subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. These holidays are organised and operated by Newmarket Holidays Ltd, a company wholly independent of News UK. ABTOT 5509. ATOL protected 2325. ABTA V7812. Standard phone charges apply.

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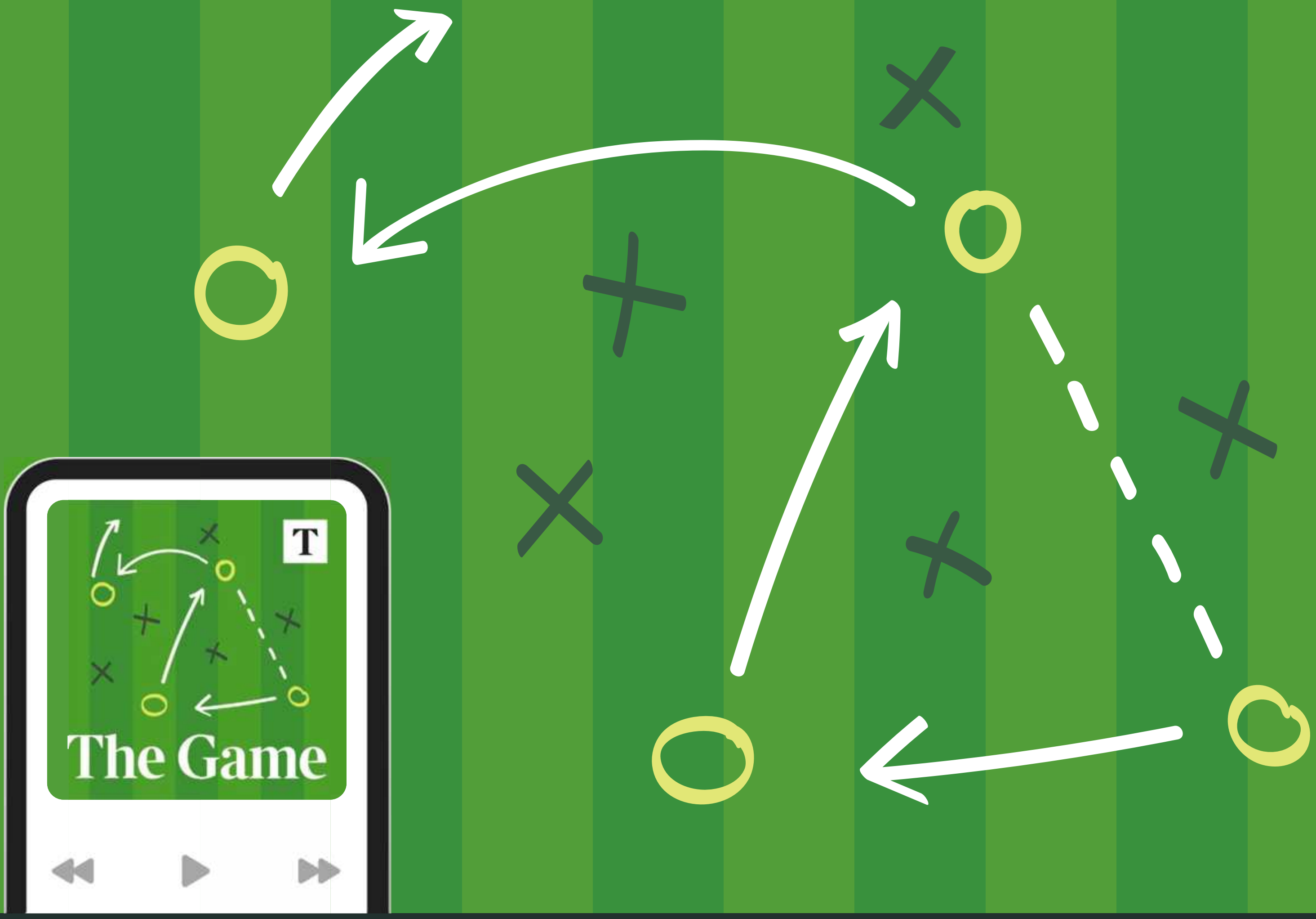

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Sport

Woodcock 'lost world' celebrated by plaque

STEPHEN NICHOLLS; FAIRFAX MEDIA ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

JOHN CHARLES WOODCOCK OBE
1926 - 2021
"THE SAGE OF LONGP
PATRON OF THIS C
TIMES CRICKET COR
HE CHRONICLED OVER
"THE FINEST OF ALL
THIS WINDOW MARKS
ASSOCIATION W
BEN'S QUALITY DRYCLEANERS

Atherton, the Rev Terry Hemming, Christopher Woodcock (elder nephew) and Humphrey Roebuck, a local young cricketer, at the plaque unveiling that marked what would have been the 100th birthday of John Woodcock, above

Mike Atherton, The Times chief cricket correspondent, has unveiled a plaque commemorating his predecessor John Woodcock on what would have been his 100th birthday.

Woodcock, who held the role from 1954 to 1987, died in 2021 aged 94. His byline appeared in the paper for more than 60 consecutive years with his last piece published a year before his death.

The plaque sits beneath a stained-glass window in St Nicholas church, Longparish, Hampshire, which celebrates his and his family's connection to both the church and village that stretches back more than 250 years.

In The Times' cricket newsletter last week Atherton wrote: "John is the best remembered of all The Times' cricket correspondents, since he did the job for more than three decades. He was a link to a lost world: on his first Ashes tour, the famous 1954-55 tour when England won down under for the first time since the war, he travelled by boat.

"On John's 90th birthday, I did a long interview with him which remains one of my favourite pieces.

"We chatted a lot about how the correspondent's job had changed over the years.

"He was sure he had the best of it: pre-internet; paper edition only; a gentler, less combative time; the barriers between players and journalists non-existent, and a game that was much simpler then than now."

Windsor

Thunderer

5.45 Mythological Star
6.15 Harry Knows (nb)
6.45 Wateera
7.15 King Of Light
7.45 Princess Honey Bee
8.15 My Old Mate (nap)

Going: good to firm

Draw: 6f, high numbers best **Sky Sports Racing**

5.45 Handicap (£4,397: 1m 2f) (6 runners)

1	(6)	-1334	**SHADY BAY** 28 (T,D) T Ward 5-9-13	**Ashley Lewis**
2	(1)	26343	**JUST AN HOUR** 18 (BF,CD) B Millman 6-9-12	**C Tucker (7)**
3	(4)	35544	**GOLDEN CIRCET** 11 (D) J & S Best 6-9-10	**L Wright**
4	(2)	-0350	**POST RIDER** 27 Oliver Cole 5-9-9	**M Paetel**
5	(3)	0331	**MYTHOLOGICAL STAR** 6 D & C Kubler 3-9-8(6ex)	**C Howarth**
6	(5)	36134	**HELLO COTAI** 25 (CD) J Boyle 5-9-4	**C Planas**

11-8 Mythological Star, 7-2 Just An Hour, 5-1 Shady Bay, 6-1 Golden Circet, 8-1 Hello Cotai, 16-1 Post Rider.

Thunderer's choice: Mythological Star can shrug off the 6lb penalty he has for his win at Ffos Las **Danger**: Shady Bay

6.15 Nursery (2-Y-O: £5,653: 6f) (5)

1	(3)	24221	**HARRY KNOWS** 14 (P,CD) R Hughes 9-10	**O Murphy**
2	(4)	0341	**KEEP KICKING ON** 21 (CD) C Cox 9-7	**H Crouch**
3	(5)	242	**THIS MOMENT** 42 G Boughey 9-3	**B Loughnane**
4	(1)	64110	**EVERATEASE** 11 (D) E J-Houghton 9-3	**C Hutchinson**
5	(2)	65106	**EL LAMBO** 21 (D) C Hills 8-12	**R Hornby**

Evens Harry Knows, 3-1 Keep Kicking On, 7-2 This Moment, 10-1 Everatease, 25-1 El Lambo.

Thunderer's choice: Harry Knows was an emphatic winner here two weeks ago **Danger**: Keep Kicking On

6.45 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £4,320: 6f) (6)

1	(3)	1	**REAL BULLET** 28 (CD) G Boughey 9-8	**B Loughnane**
2	(2)	13	**WATEERA** 48 (BF,D) K R Burke 9-6	**C Lee**
3	(5)		**AKSEL** M Attwater 9-4	**S C Cronin (5)**
4	(1)	0	**GOLDTRADER** 79 E Walker 9-4	**K Shoemark**
5	(6)		**MAJOR LOOKTWICE** G & J Moore 9-4	**H Crouch**
6	(4)	05	**PARKERS LIGHT** 23 T Dascombe 9-4	**W Cox**

4-6 Wateera, 15-8 Real Bullet, 16-1 Major Looktwice, 20-1 Parkers Light, 25-1 Goldtrader, 33-1 Aksel.

Thunderer's choice: Wateera was a close third at Newbury after his debut win at Wetherby **Danger**: Real Bullet

7.15 Handicap (£41,232: 6f) (16)

1	(16)	10111	**BADRI** 24 (CD) M Herrington 9-9-12	**O Murphy**
2	(9)	51000	**KING OF LIGHT** 9 (CD) S C Williams 4-9-10	**M Ghiani**
3	(2)	-0400	**TREFOR** 30 (CD) C Hills 5-9-4	**K Shoemark**
4	(1)	00213	**INDIAN RUN** 16 (D) J Camacho 5-9-3	**R Sexton**
5	(12)	01001	**ANOTHER ABBOT** 14 (T,CD) W Haggas 4-9-3	**T Marquand**
6	(5)	50140	**DESERT COP** 13 (P,CD) G Baker 6-9-2	**B Sayette**
7	(15)	-3222	**SUDDEN FLIGHT** 14 (P,D) R Hughes 4-9-1	**F Marsh**
8	(8)	-6054	**ROSARIO** 31 R Teal 5-9-0	**H Crouch**
9	(14)	20050	**CINDY LOU WHO** 13 (CD) A Carroll 4-9-0	**W Carson**
10	(10)	-2520	**UNCLE DON** 56 (BF) R Cowell 4-9-0	**C Lee**
11	(6)	44010	**DILIGENTLY** 31 (CD) C Cox 4-8-13	**B Loughnane**
12	(13)	13154	**JUSTCALLMEPETE** 12 (B,CD) A Carroll 7-8-11	**D Costello**
13	(7)	14015	**DREAM COMPOSER** 40 (P,C,D) A Carroll 8-8-11	**Myla Coppins**
14	(4)	00100	**PUREST TIME** 31 (CD) I Williams 6-8-11	**E Greatrex**
15	(3)	00566	**STAR CHORUS** 14 (H,D) M Murphy 4-8-10	**R Hornby**
16	(11)	63036	**BALDOMERO** 16 (V,D) M Appleby 8-8-10	**H Davies**

9-2 Another Abbot, 5-1 Badri, 6-1 Sudden Flight, 7-1 Diligently, 10-1 Indian Run, King Of Light, Trefor, 12-1 Uncle Don.

Thunderer's choice: King Of Light was not beaten far in the Stewards' Cup last time **Dangers**: Sudden Flight, Another Abbot

7.45 Fillies' Stakes (£4,320: 1m) (8)

1	(2)		**GIFT BOX** Mrs L Mongan 3-9-2	**W Carson**
2	(7)	0553	**STERLING FORTUNE** 26 J Tate 3-9-2	**H Crouch**
3	(8)	55	**DAYNA** 9 E De Giles 3-9-0	**C Lee**
4	(6)	34-22	**PRINCESS HONEY BEE** 14 Craig Lidster 3-9-0	**B Loughnane**
5	(4)		**MOONSWEPT** D & C Kubler 3-8-12	**E Nader**
6	(3)	50	**MYSTIC MUSIC** 127 A Balding 3-8-12	**C Hutchinson**
7	(5)	055-3	**SOMETHINGINTHEAIR** 6 J S Moore 3-8-12	**J F Egan**
8	(1)	64	**THUNDER GODDESS** 140 A Balding 3-8-12	**R Hornby**

11-8 Princess Honey Bee, 3-1 Sterling Fortune, 4-1 Somethingintheair, 7-1 Moonswept, 14-1 Thunder Goddess, 25-1 Mystic Music, 33-1 Gift Box, Dayna.

Thunderer's choice: Princess Honey Bee has solid form claims and Billy Loughnane takes over **Danger**: Somethingintheair

8.15 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,768: 1m) (11)

1	(4)	5050	**FIZZY BEAR** 82 G Baker 9-9	**B Sayette**
2	(6)	-0021	**MY OLD MATE** 44 (CD) G & J Moore 9-8	**B Loughnane**
3	(2)	5003	**INGEMAR** 12 (H) B Meehan 9-7	**J Leavy**
4	(1)	-0546	**TORBADOS** 20 (B,BF) C Hills 9-7	**R Hornby**
5	(9)	0-03	**TWILIGHT BABY** 22 G Kelleway 9-6	**Doubtful**
6	(10)	0506	**LANDSLIDE** 19 (H) Oliver Cole 9-6	**C Lee**
7	(3)	0-623	**KARISMA'S ANGEL** 25 E Walker 9-6	**K Shoemark**
8	(8)	04612	**CRECIENTE** 9 (P,BF) B Millman 9-4	**O Murphy**
9	(11)	50-05	**NEAT AND TIDY** 20 R Hughes 9-4	**F Marsh**
10	(7)	60404	**BENNYWORTH** 12 J Boyle 9-1	**T Heard**
11	(5)	00000	**MR JEFFREY** 19 R Cook & J Bridger 8-9	**Ashley Lewis (3)**

15-8 My Old Mate, 3-1 Creciente, 9-2 Karisma's Angel, 8-1 Torbados, 10-1 Ingemar, 14-1 Landslide, 16-1 Fizzy Bear, 20-1 Neat And Tidy.

Thunderer's choice: My Old Mate was a decisive winner here on his latest start **Dangers**: Creciente, Torbados

Ayr

Thunderer

1.45 Next Of Kin
2.15 Hostelry
2.45 Carmel Valley
3.15 Star Cast
3.45 Henery Hawk
4.15 Recobella
4.45 Tee Aitch Aye
5.15 Paroda Diva

Going: good-good to soft in places

Draw: no advantage **Racing TV**

1.45 Fillies' Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,757: 6f) (9)

1	(2)	6	**ASHINA** 65 D O'Meara 9-2	**D Tudhope**
2	(9)	5	**DADAWADA** 41 C Kellett 9-2	**T Eaves**
3	(6)	65	**DESERT SMOKE** 16 (BF) H Palmer 9-2	**P Mulrennan**
4	(5)	35	**FLY SMARTLY** 22 Robson Aguiar 9-2	**D O'Connor**
5	(4)	0	**LADY TITANIA** 31 (T) K R Burke 9-2	**S James**
6	(3)		**LA FLOR GRANADA** R & P Fahey 9-2	**O Orr**
7	(7)		**MYESME** E Bethell 9-2	**J Hart**
8	(1)	3	**NEXT OF KIN** 24 W Haggas 9-2	**C Fallon**
9	(8)	6	**OH SO SLOW SLOTH** 85 (H) R Menzies 9-2	**Kaiya Fraser**

11-4 Next Of Kin, 7-2 Desert Smoke, 4-1 Fly Smartly, 11-2 La Flor Granada, 13-2 Myesme, 14-1 Ashina, Lady Titania, 25-1 Dadawada, Oh So Slow Sloth.

2.15 Classified Stakes (£3,664: 1m) (12)

1	(1)	-6003	**BRIDGEFOOT RAMBLER** 25 (B) S Hanlon 4-9-9	**C Whiteley (5)**
2	(3)	40000	**CONCERT BOY** 20 (B,D) K Scott 6-9-9	**S James**
3	(12)	04005	**DUE RESPECT** 6 (V) Gary Rutherford 4-9-9	**J Dickson (5)**
4	(9)	/000-	**GAME MANAGEMENT** J314 (D) Lizzie Quinlan 5-9-9	**D Nolan**
5	(10)	55545	**HOSTELRY** 9 (V,CD) R Carr 9-9-9	**Joanna Mason**
6	(4)	30302	**MILLBUIE** 10 (B,T) Ewan Whillans 5-9-9	**W Pyle**
7	(11)	40000	**RING OF GOLD** 9 (V) M & D Easterby 9-9-9	**B Garritty**
8	(7)	340-0	**SPIRIT OF NATURE** 14 J Goldie 4-9-9	**P Mulrennan**
9	(8)	-0605	**CHARCON** 16 (P) B Haslam 3-9-2	**A Brookes**
10	(2)	050	**HAWKSWORTH** 45 J & S Quinn 3-9-2	**J Hart**
11	(5)	60-43	**ROYAL BARONESS** 66 R M Smith 3-9-2	**S Farmer (5)**
12	(6)	06000	**SANNY DOO** 2 (P) J Goldie 3-9-2	**A Mullen**

4-1 Bridgefoot Rambler, 9-2 Hostelry, 5-1 Millbuie, 7-1 Royal Baroness, 8-1 Spirit Of Nature, Due Respect, Charcon, 10-1 Game Management.

2.45 Handicap (£3,664: 7f) (13)

1	(5)	02-52	**CATTON LADY** 38 M & D Easterby 5-10-2	**Joanna Mason**
2	(12)	00040	**GRESSINGTON** 19 (B,D) K Scott 5-10-0	**S James**
3	(9)	00500	**PAL JOEY** 16 (T) B Haslam 4-10-0	**A Brookes**
4	(2)	06060	**KELPIE GREY** 2 (BF,CD) J Goldie 6-9-13	**P Mulrennan**
5	(11)	52344	**NOVAK** 14 (CD) I Jardine 7-9-12	**A Mullen**
6	(8)	-0000	**STONEYWELL** 52 (H) Steph Hollinshead 4-9-11	**T Eaves**
7	(13)	-6000	**TROPEZ POWER** 14 (V,D) M Walford 7-9-10	**D Allan**
8	(1)	05330	**YAASER** 2 (CD) J Goldie 8-9-9	**Lauren Young (5)**
9	(10)	-0002	**KEEP ME STABLE** 3 (C,D) Miss L Perratt 6-9-9	**T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
10	(7)	06023	**CARMEL VALLEY** 14 K Scott 3-9-8	**J Hart**
11	(6)	04136	**BLACK ROCK BEAUTY** 31 (P,D) R & P Fahey 3-9-8	**O Orr**
12	(4)	5-310	**ALBEYOURS** 18 (P,D) Steph Hollinshead 5-9-4	**D Tudhope**
13	(3)	00-00	**JOSHUAS DREAM** 14 (P) J Goldie 4-9-1	**B Garritty**

7-2 Carmel Valley, 9-2 Keep Me Stable, 13-2 Novak, 7-1 Catton Lady, Kelpie Grey, 8-1 Yaaser, 10-1 Albeyours, 12-1 Pal Joey.

3.15 Handicap (£5,234: 1m 2f) (14)

1	(1)	-0525	**NORTHWEST PASSAGE** 36 (D) I Furtado 4-10-4	**J Hart**
2	(9)	0-501	**SPIRIT OF ACKLAM** 30 (P,CD) M & D Easterby 5-10-2	**Joanna Mason**
3	(6)	13211	**STAR CAST** 52 (CD) G Tutty 4-10-2	**J Dickson (5)**
4	(7)	3-600	**REGALIAN** 16 (B) T Coyle & K Wood 4-10-1	**D Nolan**
5	(4)	-0255	**OBITO** 32 (H,CD) D O'Meara 4-10-1	**D Tudhope**
6	(11)	25242	**MANO CHICAGO** 49 (B,BF) I Jardine 4-10-0	**A Mullen**
7	(5)	/0223	**BREAK THE BANK** 16 (B) T Easterby 5-9-12	**Doubtful**
8	(14)	13614	**PEARL EYE** 14 (P,BF,CD) J Goldie 6-9-12	**P Mulrennan**
9	(2)	130-6	**SIMPLY RUBY** 28 (P) D Sayer 4-9-8	**W Pyle**
10	(13)	-0006	**CISCO DISCO** 21 (CD) R M Smith 8-9-7	**S B Kirrane**
11	(8)	0-515	**LORCA'S WALTZ** 17 (T) W Haggas 3-9-6	**C Fallon**
12	(3)	04-06	**MOLINARI** 16 (D) M Todhunter 9-9-2	**B Garritty**
13	(12)	16-50	**BOY NAMED SIOUX** 24 (H) R & P Fahey 3-8-12	**S Gray**
14	(10)	-2531	**ZIATA** 14 (D) G Tutty 3-8-11	**Kaiya Fraser**

2-1 Star Cast, 11-2 Pearl Eye, Spirit Of Acklam, 13-2 Mano Chicago, Lorca's Waltz, 10-1 Ziata, 14-1 Obito, Northwest Passage.

3.45 Handicap (£4,187: 6f) (16)

1	(9)	00462	**VELVET SKIES** 11 (D) Mr W G Harrison 5-9-12	**B McHugh**
2	(13)	53650	**WATER OF LEITH** 2 (CD) J Goldie 8-9-12	**Lauren Young (5)**
3	(6)	30353	**HENERY HAWK** 14 Miss L Perratt 7-9-9	**D Allan**
4	(4)	-0005	**EDMOND HALLEY** 26 E Bethell 4-9-9	**C Horgan (5)**
5	(16)	-4045	**HEAD FOR FREEDOM** 57 M & D Easterby 3-9-8	**Joanna Mason**
6	(1)	00004	**LORD ABAMA** 9 (B,D) M Dods 7-9-7	**S B Kirrane**
7	(14)	-0000	**MACEDONIAN** 27 (V,D) M Dods 4-9-7	**M Winn**
8	(2)	50040	**WHITE UMBRELLA** 11 (B,D) C Kellett 7-9-4	**T Eaves**
9	(7)	40100	**DOON THE GLEN** 2 (V,D) J Goldie 6-9-3	**P Mulrennan**
10	(5)	46250	**PIVOTAL TERMS** 10 (H,D) I Jardine 3-9-2	**A Mullen**
11	(15)	02150	**MONASTERE** 24 (D) K Thornton (Ire) 4-9-0	**J Hart**
12	(3)	05314	**SIXCOR** 10 (P,CD) Miss L Perratt 8-9-0	**T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
13	(12)	62300	**SKI ANGEL** 14 (C) R M Smith 6-8-12	**Amie Waugh (3)**
14	(8)	00-30	**RED WALLS** 34 (D) L Williamson 8-8-12	**J Nicholls (3)**
15	(11)	50263	**BABY ROVER** 25 (D) K Scott 4-8-12	**G Fairley**
16	(10)	23435	**LANARRA** 2 (D) R M Smith 3-8-11	**W Pyle**

11-2 Henery Hawk, 13-2 Velvet Skies, 7-1 Lanarra, 15-2 Sixcor, 8-1 Baby Rover, Doon The Glen, 10-1 Water Of Leith, 12-1 others.

4.15 Handicap (Div I: £3,664: 1m 2f) (12)

1	(4)	15-20	**LESRICO** 58 (H,D) L Williamson 6-10-2	**M Winn**
2	(7)	4-100	**KING CHAOS** 11 R Menzies 5-10-1	**Kaiya Fraser**
3	(10)	22244	**NATURALIA** 16 (C) D Whillans 5-9-13	**P Mulrennan**
4	(9)	03-00	**PRECIOUS SPARTAN** 35 (P) P Neville 4-9-13	**A Mullen**
5	(12)	-6540	**IDYLLIC** 16 (D) W Storey 5-9-10	**Paula Muir (3)**
6	(3)	00543	**PENELOPE'S SISTER** 14 (C) J Goldie 6-9-10	**S Farmer (5)**
7	(5)	4-054	**RAVENSCRAIG CASTLE** 14 (B,C) I Jardine 8-9-8	**C Tuke (7)**
8	(2)	35251	**RECOBELLA** 36 (CD) P Kirby 5-9-7	**J Nicholls (3)**
9	(11)	-0050	**LIGHTNING GALAXY** 35 (T) M Dods 4-9-6	**S B Kirrane**
10	(1)	0600-	**SHE'S GOT BOTTLE** 297 (D) Lizzie Quinlan 7-9-6	**B McHugh**
11	(6)	60536	**POSITIVE THOUGHTS** 20 (B) J & S Quinn 3-9-2	**J Hart**
12	(8)	4-000	**PAROLE OFFICER** 35 (P) Ewan Whillans 3-8-12	**G Fairley**

100-30 Recobella, 4-1 Penelope's Sister, 11-2 Lesrico, 13-2 Naturalia, 7-1 Ravenscraig Castle, 10-1 Positive Thoughts, 12-1 others.

4.45 Handicap (Div II: £3,664: 1m 2f) (12)

1	(10)	2-003	**WEST TYRONE** 62 (P) Lizzie Quinlan 4-10-2	**S Gray**
2	(3)	03011	**ROYAL BLAZE** 14 (P,T,CD) Ewan Whillans 5-10-1	**D Nolan**
3	(11)	22050	**SPIRIT CATCHER** 30 P Kirby 7-9-13	**C Fallon**
4	(2)	04562	**SWEET KISS** 16 (D) T Easterby 4-9-11	**J Dickson (5)**
5	(7)	00063	**TEE AITCH AYE** 35 (P) I Jardine 5-9-10	**A Mullen**
6	(1)	06565	**MOTAWAARED** 21 J Goldie 4-9-9	**P Mulrennan**
7	(8)	60514	**GLASSES UP** 21 (BF,CD) R M Smith 11-9-8	**D Allan**
8	(9)	4634	**CEINTURE D'ORION** 39 D O'Meara 3-9-7	**D Tudhope**
9	(5)	4-000	**COSMIC MAN** 62 K Ryan 3-9-6	**T Eaves**
10	(12)	030-4	**FARABOVE THE LIMIT** 187 Phillip Makin 3-9-3	**S James**
11	(4)	-0505	**RUGBY UNION** 14 G Tutty 3-8-13	**Kaiya Fraser**
12	(6)	00400	**ONYEISI** 24 (B,D) K Thornton (Ire) 3-8-12	**J Hart**

100-30 Royal Blaze, 11-2 West Tyrone, 7-1 Tee Aitch Aye, 15-2 Sweet Kiss, Glasses Up, 8-1 Spirit Catcher, Ceinture D'orion, 12-1 Motawaared.

5.15 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 1m) (10)

1	(5)	-0104	**NAPOLIAN** 13 (D) D O'Meara 9-9	**D Tudhope**
2	(2)	524-	**ADIADA** 293 (H) M Dods 9-9	**S B Kirrane**
3	(1)	4-523	**KEEP AN EYE ON IT** 120 T Coyle & K Wood 9-7	**D Nolan**
4	(3)	31-63	**BECKON** 117 (D) S Corbett 9-6	**T Eaves**
5	(4)	05601	**WISE CRACK** 19 (V) R Carr 9-6	**S Gray**
6	(8)	04612	**PARODA DIVA** 68 (P,D) P Neville 9-5	**A Mullen**
7	(7)	35046	**VEGA STORM** 19 R & P Fahey 9-3	**H Russell**
8	(10)	-4455	**LIGHT THE NIGHT UP** 28 K R Burke 9-3	**S James**
9	(6)	02116	**HATAMOTO** 14 (P,D) T Easterby 9-0	**D Allan**
10	(9)	00-0	**OUR RANDOLPH** 56 M Dods 8-12	**M Winn**

7-2 Paroda Diva, 9-2 Keep An Eye On It, 5-1 Wise Crack, 13-2 Beckon, 15-2 Adiada, 8-1 Hatamoto, Vega Storm, 14-1 Light The Night Up.

Kempton Park

Thunderer

2.30 Singing Blues
3.00 Playfull Warrior
3.30 Lushill
4.00 Fallacious Promise
4.30 Shirakawa
5.00 Believitanducan

Going: standard to slow

Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best **Racing TV**

2.30 Fillies' Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,940: 7f) (12)

1	(11)	**ALIDOOLALLY** D Menuisier 9-2	**S Osborne**
2	(9)	**APRIL'S LUCK** D Cunha 9-2	**L Morris**
3	(6)	**BLUE VIXEN** A King 9-2	**L Catton (3)**
4	(2)	**GRETA TINTIN** A Balding 9-2	**D Probert**
5	(7)	**HIDDEN BEYOND** C Hills 9-2	**J Watson**
6	(12)	**NOUVA STELLA** Harry Eustace 9-2	**G Wood**
7	(4)	**SINGING BLUES** T Ward 9-2	**P-L Jamin**
8	(8)	**TIKKA** J Fanshawe 9-2	**D Muscutt**
9	(1)	**BLANQUITA** D Cunha 8-13	**S Donohoe**
10	(5)	**ISABELLA OF ARAGON** D F Davis 8-13	**B Ffrench-Davis (5)**
11	(10)	**LADY GLORIANA** R Burdon 8-13	**S D Bowen**
12	(3)	**RHYTHM OF MY HEART** D Menuisier 8-13	**S M Levey**

3-1 Greta Tintin, 4-1 Hidden Beyond, 11-2 Rhythm Of My Heart, 8-1 Alidoolally, 10-1 Nouva Stella, Blue Vixen, 12-1 Tikka, 14-1 Blanquita, April's Luck.

3.00 Maiden Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,940: 7f) (12)

1	(5)	**ALAM RAYAN** Michael Keady 9-7	**C Shepherd**
2	(7)	**CELTIC STORM** R Hughes 9-7	**P Dobbs**
3	(2)	**FIND YOUR FIRE** S C Williams 9-7	**S M Levey**
4	(3)	**KIRIL** P Owens 9-7	**J Callan**
5	(1)	**PLAYFULL WARRIOR** C Cox 9-7	**Georgia Dobie**
6	(12)	**STORM FORCE TEN** J Osborne 9-7	**S Osborne**
7	(9)	**WITHOUT FAIL** M Bell 9-7	**R Coakley**
8	(10)	**DREAMED** James Horton 9-4	**J Mitchell**
9	(6)	**REICHENBACH FALLS** S C Williams 9-4	**D Egan**
10	(11)	**TREDEGAR SQUARE** J Fanshawe 9-4	**D Muscutt**
11	(4)	**THESPIAN QUEEN** E J-Houghton 9-2	**C Bishop**
12	(8)	**TOJOANNIE** (H) A Balding 9-2	**D Probert**

3-1 Tojoannie, 11-2 Thespian Queen, 6-1 Playfull Warrior, 7-1 Celtic Storm, 10-1 Without Fail, Storm Force Ten, 12-1 Tredegar Square, Find Your Fire.

3.30 Nursery (2-Y-O: £3,140: 1m) (9)

1	(6)	50523	**HAMDANI MOKHATER** 19 (B,BF) James Horton 9-9	**H Vigors (5)**
2	(3)	000	**TEN OF CLUBS** 32 J Osborne 9-9	**S Osborne**
3	(9)	5323	**LUSHILL** 6 J S Moore 9-8	**Millie Wonnacott (5)**
4	(2)	006	**BOLLENGO BOY** 14 E J-Houghton 9-7	**C Bishop**
5	(1)	004	**LADY MIRANDA** 18 R Hannon 9-7	**P Dobbs**
6	(8)	54543	**MAGICAL LIFE** 13 J S Moore 8-11	**D Egan**
7	(7)	000	**ALLABOUTTHELUNCH** 63 E Smyth-Osbourne 8-5	**Georgia Dobie**
8	(4)	0005	**EMIRATES EXPRESS** 13 (B) Jack Morland 8-5	**L Morris**
9	(5)	000	**BIG BAD STORM** 14 (V) I Mohammed & J Santos 8-5	**S D Bowen**

5-2 Hamdani Mokhater, 5-1 Magical Life, 6-1 Lady Miranda, 7-1 Emirates Express, Bollengo Boy, 8-1 Lushill, 10-1 Big Bad Storm, Ten Of Clubs, 20-1 Allabouttthelunch.

4.00 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 1m) (14)

1	(6)	06512	**ROI DE COEUR** 18 (BF,CD) M Botti 9-9	**L Catton (3)**
2	(12)	0-100	**MOJITO** 19 R Hannon 9-9	**S M Levey**
3	(9)	026-2	**SOMETHING COMING** 42 P Chapple-Hyam 9-9	**D Probert**
4	(14)	0540	**SANTIAGO BOY** 35 (B) C Hills 9-9	**H Vigors (5)**
5	(7)	035-2	**SHADOWMERE** 79 G Baker 9-8	**N Callan**
6	(1)	24535	**BATTOSAI** 12 Jack Morland 9-7	**Josephine Gordon**
7	(5)	10000	**SEU JO** 11 (D) J Boyle 9-6	**P Bradley**
8	(3)	22-06	**BALLYBUNION** 10 M Bell 9-6	**C Shepherd**
9	(8)	0-54	**COXY'S STAR** 36 W Muir & C Grassick 9-4	**L Edmunds**
10	(11)	06325	**BERKSHIRE BOOM** 17 A Balding 9-4	**J Watson**
11	(2)	62650	**ALKUMATIC JO JO** 14 I Furtado 9-3	**J Peate**
12	(10)	22312	**FALLACIOUS PROMISE** 33 (BF,D) J Butler 9-2	**L Morris**
13	(4)	654-0	**ATHENA'S WAR** 143 S Hodgson 9-1	**Isobelle Chalmers (7)**
14	(13)	33000	**MEHMAS ENGINE** 42 (H) L Dace 9-1	**R Clutterbuck**

3-1 Fallacious Promise, 11-2 Something Coming, 6-1 Roi De Coeur, 7-1 Shadowmere, 8-1 Coxy's Star, 10-1 Berkshire Boom, 12-1 Santiago Boy, Ballybunion.

4.30 Handicap (£4,187: 1m 3f) (10)

1	(5)	46255	**KURIOS LADY** 51 M Madgwick 4-10-1	**G Wood**
2	(7)	3-002	**FLIGHTOFTHEPHOENIX** 11 C Hills 4-10-0	**J Watson**
3	(10)	3-334	**GHOST STORY** 27 J Butler 5-10-0	**D Egan**
4	(2)	30-60	**CONNIE MOON** 180 (V) D Coakley 4-9-13	**G Bass**
5	(9)	006	**SULLOM VOE** 61 D Menuisier 3-9-8	**S Osborne**
6	(3)	244	**CELESTIAL CEN** 24 A Watson 3-9-8	**L Morris**
7	(4)	5-60	**ANTIQUARIAN** 67 G & J Moore 3-9-7	**R Clutterbuck**
8	(8)	-4443	**HOT SILK** 27 (BF) J Fanshawe 3-9-5	**H Vigors (5)**
9	(1)	40112	**SHIRAKAWA** 18 (BF) E J-Houghton 3-9-5	**C Bishop**
10	(6)	-5142	**MOHAAB** 44 W Muir & C Grassick 3-9-4	**L Edmunds**

4-1 Hot Silk, 9-2 Shirakawa, 5-1 Flightofthephoenix, 6-1 Mohaab, 7-1 Celestial Cen, 10-1 Ghost Story, Kurios Lady, 12-1 Sullom Voe.

5.00 Handicap (£6,281: 2m) (12)

1	(2)	2-111	**BELIEVITANDUCAN** 44 (D) A King 5-10-4	**L Catton (3)**
2	(12)	3400-	**SCOTTISH ANTHEM** 24 (P,T) S Edmunds 7-10-0	**Millie Wonnacott (5)**
3	(3)	421-2	**MAXIDENT** 64 (BF) K P De Foy 6-9-13	**D Egan**
4	(10)	35011	**SENOR CORTEZ** 28 (D) J Butler 5-9-12	**J Callan**
5	(9)	24550	**ROCK N ROLL PINKIE** 30 (D) I Furtado 6-9-11	**S D Bowen**
6	(1)	0/060	**PREMIERE LIGNE** 44 (T) H Morrison 7-9-10	**D Muscutt**
7	(8)	45-35	**DOUBLE MEANING** 58 (BF,D) J Berry 4-9-8	**S Osborne**
8	(11)	10222	**KNIGHT TEMPLAR** 17 (CD) R Stephens 5-9-7	**D Probert**
9	(5)	60003	**BARENBOIM** 33 (P,CD) T Dascombe 8-9-7	**P-L Jamin**
10	(4)	032-4	**KINGDOM OF STARS** 58 (CD) Kerry Lee 5-9-5	**C Bishop**
11	(7)	02-24	**KILLER WHALE** 65 A Balding 3-8-8	**J Watson**
12	(6)	43222	**DESERT BELLE** 5 (P,BF) Sir M Prescott 3-8-2	**L Morris**

3-1 Believitanducan, 9-2 Senor Cortez, 5-1 Desert Belle, 7-1 Maxident, 10-1 Double Meaning, Knight Templar, 12-1 Barenboim, 16-1 Killer Whale, Rock N Roll Pinkie.

Yesterday's racing results

Chepstow

Going: Good to Firm

2.06 (6f 16yd) 1, **Arnaz** (Hope Regan, 9-1); 2, Marisitta (11-2); 3, Some Nightmare (13-2). 7 ran. 2¼l, ½l. D M Loughnane.

2.41 (5f 16yd) 1, **Dreams Galore** (F Marsh, 5-1); 2, Crystal Kraken (11-4 fav); 3, Chianti (10-3). 8 ran. 2l, 2¼l. Ollie Sangster.

3.16 (6f 16yd) 1, **Eastern Queen** (D Murphy, 11-4); 2, Global Success (5-4); 3, Bahia Bonita (15-2). 9 ran. sh, ½l. John O'Donoghue.

3.51 (6f 16yd) 1, **Ken Brulee** (Rose Dawes, 11-2); 2, My Mate Mackley (4-1); 3, Geemann (9-1). 8 ran. ¾l, 1l. M D I Usher.

4.26 (1m 14yd) 1, **Redhot Whisper** (F Marsh, 7-1); 2, The Bureau Club (22-1); 3, Too Much Trevor (14-1). 12 ran. sh, 3¼l. A Wintle.

5.01 (1m 2f) 1, **Crimson Road** (W Carson, 6-5 fav); 2, Stipulation (13-2); 3, Symphony's Song (100-30). 6 ran. 1½l, 2l. J L Flint.

Placepot: £176.90
Quadpot: £14.10

Leicester

Going: Good to Firm

2.24 (7f) 1, **Jimtrott** (C Bishop, 7-2); 2, Al Wathba (2-11 fav); 3, Ebt's Warrior (25-1). ¾l, 8l. Eve Johnson Houghton.

2.59 (7f) 1, **Katie's Cavalier** (S De Sousa, 17-2); 2, Love Rome (2-1 fav); 3, Greek Symphony (9-4). 6 ran. nk, ½l. D Loughnane.

3.34 (1m 3f 179yd) 1, **Robusto** (H Vigors, 13-2); 2, Mountbatten (9-2); 3, Barak Warrior (6-4 fav). 6 ran. 2¼l, 5l. Eve Johnson Houghton.

4.09 (1m 53yd) 1, **Tamzan** (R Hornby, 2-1 fav); 2, Venetian Sky (4-1); 3, Kaori (13-2). 5 ran. ¾l, 1¼l. M P Tregoning.

4.44 (6f) 1, **Ray Mon Dough** (H Crouch, 13-8); 2, Sea Cookie (11-8); 3, Evening Blues (3-1). 4 ran. NR: Art Lover, Percy's Star. 47½l, 27½l. Oliver Cole.

5.19 (1m 2f) 1, **Ricardo Phillips** (Nicola Currie, 6-4 fav); 2, Pisanello (4-1); 3, Read All About It (10-1). 6 ran. 2¼l, nk. H Candy.

Placepot: £629.30 Quadpot: £44.60

Here's my advice for Marler as he trades elite sport for Gladiators

I tore my ACL and got told off by the producer but don't worry, Joe, you'll love life as 'Mauler', writes **Sharron Davies**

Dear Joe, welcome to the club of athletes who made the leap from world-class sport to *Gladiators*. Your stellar days in the scrum for England and the Lions will doubtless come in handy as "Mauler"!

If the name doesn't strike fear into the hearts of all challengers, your block surely will. I imagine it would be like hitting a brick wall.

It was the mid-1990s when I was "Amazon" on the show. *Gladiators* was a prime-time hit, often with 14 million watching on a Saturday night. Kids were allowed to watch before bedtime and parents watched before going out.

I'm really glad to see it back, inspiring kids to be physically active — and, being serious for one moment, we need to get them off their phones and back living in the moment, so I'm genuinely delighted to see it on our screens again, very much in its original format. Well done, the BBC.

I had fun in the show, as I'm sure you will too, Joe — so here are a few memories you may find useful before you become the Mauler.

Let's start with age and injury. I was 32 when I first appeared as Amazon — and back then 30 was considered "past your prime". Less so today, thank goodness, but the rough and tumble of the games on an already well-used body, and at a time of a very different health and safety environment to what's around today, led to me being injured during *Gladiators*.

In the game called Pyramid, we had to grab contestants and throw them down to prevent them from getting to the top. There were often some bad tangles. I got tangled up with a super-fit police officer, and it ended my run: snap, went the ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in my knee joint.

There was a plethora of similar accidents, but often on games that the BBC hasn't resurrected yet, like Poleaxe and Tilt.

At 36, you're a spring chicken. Even so, take care with any residual injuries from rugby days, especially anything sustained towards the end of your career. They can be accumulative and recovery can be slower. But hey, you're a rugby player, you know all this. I was a soft water-baby.

Rigorous new health and safety rules have definitely changed the show down the years and probably means you'll avoid some of the nightmares we faced. For me, the frustration was more about not getting enough time to practise. I remember doing Tilt, a version of tug of war, for the first time live on air.

I struggled with the athlete mindset I'd grown up with. You don't act in sport, it's purely about doing a job. Judy Simpson, as "Nightshade", was another world-class athlete who brought her performance mindset to the game. You're not thinking about the entertainment. It's about winning — and it's highly organised and runs to a tight schedule. And come the hour, you're in the zone, completely focused on your performance. Nothing else matters.

Gladiators is a show. It's high-octane entertainment with entourage, bells and whistles: hair, make-up, and oh … the outfit. In our day, we recorded at the NIA in Birmingham. There were a lot of big breaks between the action, as huge sets of equipment for Hang Tough, Atlaspheres and Swingshot were moved into place by brilliant roadies. There's a lot of hanging around, lots of patience required. We sat and talked to the guest contenders, formed friendships, met fans and signed autographs, while those huge sets were changed. One-hour shows often took five hours to record, and we did at least two a day.

Then, it was lights on, cameras, action — and a huge change of pace as you took on the Gauntlet, and one of the games I'm sure you'll enjoy, Joe: Powerball. We took great pride in the fact very few got through the Gauntlet. I think we were allowed to be rather more aggressive, so to speak, than you are today.

I have fond memories of being told off by producer Nigel Lythgoe after Atlaspheres on my very first show. It was the human hamster-ball game: we had to roll around the arena in metal cages that set off smoke pods. I'd put a contestant in the corner and held her there. For me, it was about winning. "Push her round the ring," Nigel said. "It's not the Olympics, Sharron — it's an entertainment show!"

Right. But I still won!

It was tough going from Sharron Davies the swimmer to Amazon the gladiator.

Mauler is your character, Joe. You get to be an actor. I didn't find that easy. I think you'll do better than me. I envisage another "Wolf" (Mike van Wijk). He was shockingly competitive — as Wolf. Very pleasant as Mike. Nothing was too much trouble for the kids. On camera, he hated losing, lost his rag, tore up the arena and argued the toss with referee, John Anderson. You're going to have so much fun.

You might also want to think about patenting "Mauler". Can you imagine how well I'd be doing if I'd only patented Amazon.

Enjoy — but be prepared to lose some of your rugby identity. For years I gave Nigel the brush off, happy to remain the swimmer, while my husband at the time, Derek Redmond, worked on the show and I co-presented the kids' *Gladiators* series *Train 2 Win* with my friend Daley Thompson. I remember being in the supermarket one day and a lady came up to me and asked if I'd sign her son's autograph book.

"Of course," I said, all smiles, but as she handed the book to her son over by the frozen chicken cabinet, I heard him say: "Mum!? Who's Sharron Davies?"

So, here's to Mauler, and I hope you inspire lots of kids to take up sport and lead an active life — and, as you scribble your name on their shirt or book, may you never hear them say: "Mum, who's Joe Marler?"

● *Sharron Davies is a former British Olympic swimmer who appeared as Amazon in Gladiators*

HUGO PFEIFFER/GETTY IMAGES; ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Marler, the ex-England prop, will become a Gladiator for the new series of the BBC show, as Davies, second row left, did in 1995

Hodgkinson: I won't lose to Werro again

Matt Lawton Chief Sports Correspondent

There is a competitive fire that burns inside Keely Hodgkinson and it grew into a raging inferno after being caught off guard by Audrey Werro in Stockholm two months ago.

When the Olympic champion went to the front with 300m of that two-lap race remaining, she did not anticipate she would essentially perform the role of pacemaker for a gifted Swiss athlete, who then came back past her in the closing straight to record the third-fastest time in history.

"I won't let that happen again," was how Hodgkinson reflected on the defeat, and the sudden realisation that an athlete who had never previously threatened her, who was almost half a straight back in second when the 24-year-old Lancastrian broke the world indoor record in March, had taken a significant step forward.

Hodgkinson improved her own British record in Sweden on June 7, clocking 1min 54.33sec. But Werro dipped under 1:54, running faster still in Paris with 1:53.80 three weeks later.

This new rivalry has made the women's 800m the box-office event of this week's European Championships in Birmingham, and a contest Hodgkinson compares to the Olympics two years ago in terms of how much it matters to her. There is a score to settle, and a mantle, as the world's best, to reclaim.

"I think it would almost mean as much to me as winning in Paris, to be honest," she said.

The Europeans is often regarded alongside the Commonwealth Games as a secondary event to the Olympics and the World Championships but sometimes the specific circumstances elevate its importance.

Seb Coe had achieved just about everything going into Stuttgart 40 years ago; two Olympic titles over 1,500m and a number of world records, with his 800m mark of 1:41.73, set in 1981, the most impressive of the lot.

But gold at a major championship in his strongest event had proved beyond his reach. He had twice taken Olympic silver, and a bronze and a silver in the previous two Europeans.

At 29, Stuttgart was Coe's last realistic chance, and he had to produce one of the finest finishing kicks of his career to overcome Tom McKean and Steve Cram. "The gold medal that had eluded me for so long was finally mine," Coe recalled in his 2013 autobiography.

It was some race. The legendary sports writer Ian Wooldridge had likened the sight of the British trio entering the home straight to "three Spitfires coming out of the sun". And with Femke Broeders-Bol also set to continue her transition from one to two circuits of a synthetic oval, Birmingham is preparing for another classic should all three athletes advance to Friday night's final.

After injury severely disrupted her plans for global dominance in 2025, Hodgkinson has encountered further difficulties this year. A fall in training that left her with badly injured knees after Stockholm led to a second defeat in Oregon, on that occasion to the world champion, Lilian Odira. But Hodgkinson responded with a morale-boosting victory in London last month and those closest to her report she was going extremely well on a mid-season training camp in Portugal; an athlete very much back to her best.

She bristled a little on Friday when asked if she thought she could emerge from this season as the world No1. "Yes, I still believe I'm very much capable of that," she said. "I feel in a good place. Obviously there was a bit of a tough patch in June/July, but I'm happy and I'm excited to compete. I think it will bring out the best in me."

She was asked for her verdict on that previous encounter with 22-year-old Werro. "I don't really think I did anything wrong," she said. "I didn't know what she was capable of at that point. That just shows you can't underestimate anybody. If you look at all our other head-to-heads, you wouldn't have thought she was going to hang on."

She appeared a little irked by the reaction in some quarters. "I think people are trying to make me feel like it was a failure and it really wasn't," she said. "That was a British record. It was my fastest time ever and I'm going to remind myself of that because I'm proud of it. I just think we've gone on since there. I had a tricky few weeks but it's really good.

"My knees are healed. It was just a sticky one. You need your knees, to run, to walk, to bend down, to stand up. I didn't miss any training or anything. There was just a lot of pain and inflammation. But when you're running at this level against these girls, these little fine margins can affect your performance.

"It was one race and I think people are very quick to judge, and don't really fully know what has happened. Maybe, in hindsight, I probably shouldn't have run in Eugene. But I'm looking forward to putting that behind me. Audrey's come on really well, Femke's running well. But I'm going well too, so I think it's going to be a really good race. We'll just see what happens."

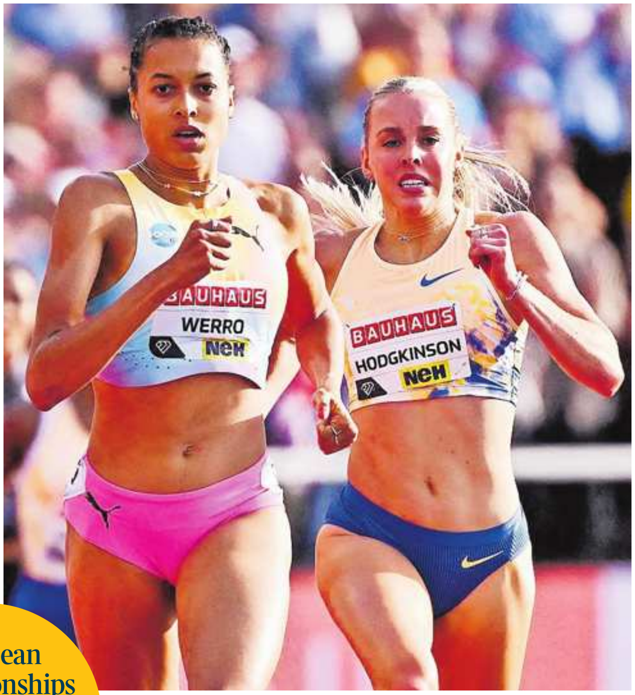
Hodgkinson does seem to thrive on such competition. "This is what I train for," she said. "This is the exciting bit. I've had lots of people come and challenge me and I've always been there. I've medalled at every single championships."

She focuses on that when others dare doubt her, even if she occasionally feels the need to shut out the noise completely. "Sometimes I delete Twitter [X]," she said. "That app is awful. Georgia [Hunter Bell] and I were laughing the other day because we saw a TikTok that said she'd paid me £200k not to do the Commonwealth Games. I thought, 'Well I didn't get that money so where the f***'s it gone?' People make up stuff. It's a strange world we live in sometimes but we just laugh about it and focus on what we've got to do."

Hodgkinson has claimed the two previous European 800m titles, in 2022 and 2024. If she does arrive at the summit of another continental podium, she will become the first British woman to complete such a hat-trick.

"It would be my fifth [European] title, indoors and out," she said. "And that is five years of work. That is five years of turning up to every championships, and winning. It's really hard to stay that consistent. But given that nobody's done it before, that would be really cool."

JONATHAN NACKSTRAND/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Werro overtakes Hodgkinson to win in Stockholm in June on her way to recording the fastest women's 800m time for 43 years

European Championships

Coverage begins today at 10.30am on BBC1 and will also be shown across the week on BBC2 and iPlayer

Results

Football

Carabao Cup first round

Mansfield (0) 0 **Sheffield Utd** (1) 3
6,908
Bamford 4
McGuinness 71
O'Hare 89

William Hill Scottish Premiership

Hearts (2) 4 **Dundee Utd** (0) 0
Renaud 4
Miller 12 (pen)
Braga 56, McPake 67
18,602

Kilmarnock (0) 1 **Celtic** (3) 5
Schjonning-Larsen 56
8,353
Hogh 2, 33, 35
Nygren 47
McCowan 75

Motherwell (0) 0 **Falkirk** (0) 0
7,028

Rangers (0) 1 **Hibernian** (1) 2
Chaiwa 85 (og)
Campbell 12 (pen)
Wright 90+3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Celtic	2	2	0	0	6	1	5	6
St Mirren	2	2	0	0	3	0	3	6
Motherwell	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Hearts	2	1	0	1	5	2	3	3
Dundee	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	3
St Johnstone	2	1	0	1	4	4	0	3
Hibernian	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
Aberdeen	2	1	0	1	2	3	-1	3
Rangers	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
Falkirk	2	0	1	1	0	2	-2	1
Dundee Utd	2	0	1	1	1	5	-4	1
Kilmarnock	2	0	0	2	4	9	-5	0

Cricket

The Hundred

Sunrisers Leeds v Welsh Fire: Men

Headingley (Welsh Fire won toss): Sunrisers Leeds (4pts) beat Welsh Fire by 71 runs

Sunrisers Leeds		(balls)
M Marsh c Woakes b Ferguson	50	(34)
†R Rickelton c Ferguson b Woakes	40	(22)
H Brook c Woakes b Clark	23	(11)
*Z Crawley c Cook b Woakes	34	(12)
D Lawrence not out	29	(15)
M Revis not out	15	(7)
Extras (b 1, lb 3, nb 1, w 5)	10	
Total (4 wkts, 100 balls)	**201**	

B Carse, M Potts, N Ellis, T Lawes and A Ahmed did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-89, 2-116, 3-121, 4-174.
Bowling Jansen 20-8-36-0; Woakes 20-9-41-2; Cook 20-2-60-0; Clark 10-3-27-1; Ferguson 20-10-22-1; Ravindra 10-2-11-0.

Welsh Fire		(balls)
*†P Salt c Revis b Carse	13	(14)
M Short c Brook b Carse	43	(29)
J Root c Rickelton b Ellis	31	(22)
J Cox c Revis b Potts	12	(11)
R Ravindra b Ellis	2	(2)
T Kohler-Cadmore Not Out	13	(10)
M Jansen c Lawes b Carse	1	(2)
C Woakes not out	13	(10)
Extras (w 2)	2	
Total (6 wkts, 100 balls)	**130**	

J Clark, L Ferguson and S Cook did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-24, 2-73, 3-99, 4-101, 5-104, 6-105.
Bowling Ahmed 20-5-33-0; Carse 20-10-24-3; Potts 20-5-26-1; Ellis 20-9-18-2; Lawes 20-8-29-0.

Women

Headingley (Sunrisers Leeds won toss): Sunrisers Leeds (4pts) beat Welsh Fire by six wickets

Welsh Fire		(balls)
G A Voll lbw b Sharma	16	(18)
S J Bryce lbw b Cross	4	(4)
F G Kemp not out	72	(45)
*G L Wareham c Litchfield b Baker	3	(8)
O P Prendergast b Baker	0	(3)
H L Graham c Cross b Sharma	7	(7)
G J Thompson run out	2	(4)
N F Holland b Sharma	9	(11)
†R M Southby run out	1	(1)
S A E Smale not out	0	(0)
Extras (lb 1, w 5, nb 1)	7	
Total (8 wkts, 100 balls)	**121**	

G E A Potts did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-9, 2-51, 3-61, 4-61, 5-70, 6-73, 7-108, 8-119.
Bowling McCarthy 10-3-17-0; Cross 15-4-16-1; Sutherland 20-9-40-0; Jonassen 15-4-19-0; Baker 20-12-15-2; Sharma 20-8-13-3.

Sunrisers Leeds		(balls)
B F Smith c Thompson b Potts	0	(3)
P E S Litchfield c Graham b Wareham	55	(25)
†L Winfield-Hill b Smale	17	(14)
A J Sutherland c Graham b Smale	28	(18)
*D R Gibson not out	10	(9)
J L Jonassen not out	6	(5)
Extras (lb 2, w 4)	6	
Total (4 wkts, 74 balls)	**122**	

D B Sharma, D E M Carter, K L Cross, C M McCarthy and H L Baker did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-0, 2-55, 3-91, 4-107.
Bowling Potts 10-6-15-1; Prendergast 15-4-34-0; Smale 20-8-23-2; Graham 15-5-24-0; Wareham 14-5-24-1.

London Spirit v Birmingham Phoenix Men

Lord's (London Spirit won toss): London Spirit (4pts) beat Birmingham Phoenix by seven wickets

Birmingham Phoenix		(balls)
†J Clarke c Livingstone b Crocombe	73	(42)
M Owen b Milne	6	(6)
J Weatherley c Pretorius b Crane	6	(14)
L Evans st Bairstow b Coles	7	(5)
S Dickson not out	51	(28)
*D Ferreira not out	14	(5)
Extras (lb 2, w 3)	5	
Total (4 wkts, 100 balls)	**162**	

J Thompson, R Ahmed, T Helm, S Mahmood and U Tariq did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-16, 2-36, 3-46, 4-138.
Bowling Willey 20-8-30-0; Milne 20-6-36-1; Coles 20-6-25-1; Crane 20-8-26-1; Overton 5-1-8-0; Livingstone 101-27-0; Crocombe 5-3-8-1.

London Spirit		(balls)
L Pretorius c Weatherley b Thompson	16	(11)
J Bairstow b Mahmood	10	(3)
L Livingstone c Dickson b Helm	66	(30)
D Brevis not out	55	(31)
J Coles not out	9	(7)
Extras (b 4, w 6)	10	
Total (3 wkts, 82 balls)	**166**	

D Willey, J Overton, J Moores, M Crane, A Milne and H Crocombe did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-11, 2-43, 3-146.
Bowling Mahmood 15-4-42-1; Helm 15-3-31-1; Ferreira 5-1-4-0; Thompson 10-3-24-1; Ahmed 12-3-31-0; Tariq 20-11-13-0; Owen 5-0-17-0.

Women

Lord's (Birmingham Phoenix won toss): London Spirit (4pts) beat Birmingham Phoenix by 32 runs

London Spirit		(balls)
G M Harris c Capsey b Khan	0	(4)
†A E Jones c Khan b King	39	(30)
M Kelly c Khan b Capsey	17	(22)
M Kapp not out	57	(28)
*C E Dean b King	7	(10)
N de Klerk not out	13	(6)
Extras (lb 3, w 4)	7	
Total (4 wkts, 100 balls)	**140**	

D J S Dottin, C R Pavely, K L George, L F Higham and H Rainey did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-6, 2-50, 3-75, 4-100.
Bowling Khan 20-12-25-1; Filer 20-10-26-0; King 20-8-18-2; Smith 15-4-18-0; Capsey 20-4-45-1; Dercksen 5-1-5-0.

Birmingham Phoenix		(balls)
D S T Perrin c George b Dean	29	(28)
†J E M Spence c Jones b Kapp	2	(5)
*E A Perry c George b Dean	6	(10)
E L Lamb b de Klerk	36	(26)
A R Capsey c Higham b Pavely	10	(7)
A Dercksen c Jones b Rainey	1	(5)
T T Beaumont c Jones b Dean	5	(6)
F S Khan not out	14	(11)
A M King lbw b de Klerk	1	(2)
Extras (w 4)	4	
Total (8 wkts, 100 balls)	**108**	

L C N Smith and L L Filer did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-10, 2-29, 3-47, 4-58, 5-62, 6-79, 7-102, 8-108.
Bowling Kapp 15-9-10-1; Rainey 20-5-22-1; George 20-3-32-0; Dean 20-6-17-3; Pavely 10-7-6-1; de Klerk 15-3-21-2.

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Trent Rockets	7	6	1	0	0	**24**	0.89
Leeds Sunrisers	7	5	2	0	0	**20**	1.09
Manchester SG	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	0.49
MI London	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	0.26
Welsh Fire	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-1.00
Southern Brave	7	2	5	0	0	**8**	-0.05
London Spirit	7	2	5	0	0	**8**	-0.15
B'ham Phoenix	7	1	6	0	0	**4**	-1.50

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Trent Rockets	7	6	1	0	0	**24**	1.60
Southern Brave	7	5	2	0	0	**20**	0.15
Manchester SG	7	4	2	0	1	**18**	0.75
Leeds Sunrisers	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	0.86
Welsh Fire	7	3	4	0	0	**12**	0.04
London Spirit	7	2	4	1	0	**10**	-0.31
MI London	7	1	5	1	0	**6**	-1.27
B'ham Phoenix	7	1	5	0	1	**6**	-1.98

Metro Bank Cup: Group A: Cheltenham Nottinghamshire 279; Gloucestershire 282-6 (J Bracey 103). *Gloucestershire (4pts) won by four wickets*. **Beckenham** Leicestershire 261-7; Kent 262-4 (D Bell-Drummond 133 not out). *Kent (4pts) won by six wickets*. **Northampton** Somerset 185; Northamptonshire 189-3. *Northamptonshire (4pts) won by seven wickets*. **Rugby** Lancashire 311-5; Warwickshire 314-8. *Warwickshire (4pts) won by two wickets*.

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Leics	8	5	3	0	0	**20**	0.52
Notts	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	0.16
Lancashire	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-0.04
Surrey	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-0.23
Kent	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-0.44
Northants	7	3	4	0	0	**12**	0.16
Somerset	7	3	4	0	0	**12**	0.09
Warks	7	3	4	0	0	**12**	-0.16
Gloucs	7	2	5	0	0	**8**	-0.12

Group B: Derby Middlesex 327-6 (B Geddes 109); Derbyshire 240. *Middlesex (4pts) won by 87 runs*. **Darlington** Durham 229-5; Essex 209. *Durham (4pts)won by 20 runs*. **Sophia Gardens** Worcestershire 278-9 (J Libby 105); Glamorgan 281-8. *Glamorgan (4pts) won by two wickets*. **Hove** Hampshire 383-9 (B Mayes 109, A Orr 105); Sussex 332 (C Tear 111). *Hampshire (4pts) won by 51 runs*.

	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR
Middlesex	7	6	1	0	0	**24**	1.61
Yorkshire	7	5	2	0	0	**20**	0.61
Durham	7	5	2	0	0	**20**	0.34
Hampshire	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-0.07
Worcs	7	4	3	0	0	**16**	-0.19
Essex	7	3	4	0	0	**12**	0.09
Derbyshire	7	2	5	0	0	**8**	0.16
Glamorgan	8	2	6	0	0	**8**	-0.93
Sussex	7	1	6	0	0	**2**	-1.47

Cycling

Tour of Poland

Leading final positions: Stage 7 (time trial; Wieliczka, 12.5km): 1, S Küng (Switz, Tudor Pro Cycling) 14min 25sec; 2, F Fisher-Black (NZ, Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe) at 4sec behind; 3, C Thornley (GB, Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe) same time. **Overall** 1, M Brenner (GER, Tudor Pro Cycling) 24hr 33min 49sec; 2, Fisher-Black at 10sec; 3 I Romeo (Sp, Movistar) 16.

Golf

US PGA Tour Wyndham Championship

Greensboro, North Carolina: Leaders after three rounds (United States unless stated): **194** B Hossler 61, 67, 66; M Brennan 66, 65, 63. **195** T Kim (S Kor) 65, 67, 63. **196** A Noren (Swe) 66, 65, 65; A Smalley 67, 64, 65. **197** D Thompson 64, 68, 65. **198** K Yu (Taiwan) 65, 68, 65. **199** J Smith (Eng) 65, 64, 70; H Hall (Eng) 69, 66, 64; N Echavarria (Col) 68, 69, 62.

Women's PIF London Championship

Centurion Club, Hertfordshire: Leading final scores (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): **270** A Huang (Can) 67, 68, 65, 70. **272** C Hull 74, 62, 67, 69. **275** S Tan (Sing) 70, 70, 71, 64. **277** P Tavatanakit (Thai) 74, 69, 66, 68. **278** K Bennett (Aus) 68, 71, 71, 68. **280** L Sobron (Sp) 71, 70, 70, 69; A Hewson 74, 66 73, 67. **281** L Hall 71, 67 71, 72; E Spitz (Austria) 68, 73, 72, 68. **Other: 282** G Hall 74, 71, 70, 67.

Motorcycling

MotoGP Grand Prix of Great Britain

Silverstone: Leading positions 1, R Fernández (Sp, Aprilia) 39min 45.930sec; 2, J Martín (Sp, Aprilia) at 2.538sec behind; 3, M Bezzecchi (It, Aprilia) 3.393. **Championship** 1, Martín 240pts; 2, Bezzecchi 209; 3, A Ogura (Japan, Aprilia) 203.

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Bradford 4 Warrington 42; Huddersfield 42 Catalans Dragons 20; Wigan 48 Toulouse 18.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	22	18	0	4	768	326	**36**
Wigan	22	17	0	5	655	401	**34**
Wakefield	22	16	0	6	609	376	**32**
Warrington	21	15	0	6	568	350	**30**
Hull KR	21	14	0	7	632	339	**28**
Leigh	22	14	0	8	488	412	**28**
St Helens	22	12	0	10	502	492	**24**
Catalans D	22	9	0	13	439	663	**18**
Toulouse	22	7	0	15	450	592	**14**
York	22	7	0	15	444	635	**14**
Castleford	22	7	0	15	390	702	**14**
Hull	22	6	0	16	385	481	**12**
Bradford	22	6	0	16	386	671	**12**
Huddersfield	22	5	0	17	375	651	**10**

Betfred Championship Batley 24 Newcastle 28; Doncaster 120 North Wales Crusaders 0; Halifax 20 Barrow 28; Hunslet 32 Keighley 18; London Broncos 92 Goole Vikings 6; Midlands Hurricanes 30 Workington 24; Oldham 31 Sheffield 30; Rochdale 22 Whitehaven 24; Salford 18 Swinton 20.

Tennis

ATP National Bank Open

Montreal: Fourth round R Jodar (Sp) bt J Lehecka (Cz) 6-3, 6-3; A Fils (Fr) bt C Norrie (GB) 6-2, 7-6 (10-8); D Merida (Sp) bt T Griekspoor (Neth) 6-3, 6-1; L Tien (US) bt T Tirante (Arg) 6-4, 6-4.

WTA National Bank Open

Toronto: Fourth round E Alexandrova (Russ) bt A Sabalenka (Bela) 7-6 (7-3), 4-6, 6-4; E Svitolina (Ukr) bt A Anisimova (US) 6-2, 6-4; E Rybakina (Kaz) bt L Samsonova (Bela) 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

Fixtures

Football

Carabao Cup first round Plymouth Argyle v Exeter City (8.0).

Athletics

Alexander Stadium, Birmingham European Championships.

Cricket

The Hundred: Trent Bridge Trent Rockets v Southern Brave (women 3.0, men 6.30).

Experiment like Boks? Borthwick isn't brave enough

Stuart Barnes

The plain truth is that some rugby matches are more important than others. There is no such thing as a friendly but occasionally it feels that the need to win isn't that far from life and death. A player can spend the week before a game in contemplation of nothing but how to win. Defeat, for a little while, is a gut-wrenching deflation that makes all the preparation, all the dreaming, seem pointless and painful.

That is the sick sense left when a European or domestic final or a grand slam is lost. Then there is a Lions series, a South Africa versus New Zealand series and every knockout stage of the World Cup, especially if you expect to conquer the world.

For the elite, everything else is part of the process en route to rugby's various Himalayan peaks. South Africa scaled the sport's Everest in 2019 and 2023 and are expected to be somewhere near the summit in 2027. Before their unprecedented attempt to lift the Webb Ellis Cup for a third consecutive time, they have the small matter of a four-match Test series against their greatest rivals, New Zealand.

These four internationals are just about winning. Beautiful, ugly, awesome or lucky. It's on the scoreboard my friend. That's the only definition of success or failure for the Springboks. New Zealand, who lost 43-10 under the guidance of Scott Robertson in the most recent encounter between the sides last year, are playing with an optimistic approach under Dave Rennie, their new head coach. Should his team lose the series narrowly, he could justifiably claim that it represents progress on the road to Sydney. But for South Africa — the world champions, the top-rated team on the planet — it's all on the scoreboard. A third World Cup win in 12 years would ease the pain but the scar would never disappear from Rassie Erasmus's Springboks.

Yes, some Test matches are more important than others. In 2019, South Africa lost to the All Blacks in the pool stage but went on to win the World Cup in Japan. Who remembers the loss to their rivals? On Saturday night they held out under pressure in Buenos Aires to record their 12th consecutive win. Coincidentally, the same number of victories England ran up recently under Steve Borthwick.

And where did that leave England when the run came to its crashing end against Scotland? Tumbling down the mountain faster than their ascent. Because each and every game was quietly notched up as proof of achievement in its own right. And that's wrong. As wrong, say, as selecting a side for no other purpose than winning in the short term against Fiji last month, for the sake — not of squad development for Australia — but primarily for a management under pressure. That is certainly how it seems.

ALEJANDRO PAGNI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Feinberg-Mngomezulu was not substituted despite a fraught game on Saturday

Erasmus explained the selection of his side who beat Argentina 17-10 on Saturday. "We had seven or eight guys who had played almost no minutes over the last six or seven weeks, so I always thought it was going to be disjointed," the head coach said. "We just had to get a lot of players through some match fitness."

It backfired in the case of the inspirational captain, Siya Kolisi, who left the field after just 25 minutes with a hamstring injury. His participation in the "Greatest Rivalry" series must be in doubt now but the philosophical manner in which the 35-year-old described his setback is a reminder that injuries occur. There is cover for their colossus of a captain, which comes from having created a large squad comfortable in Springbok colours.

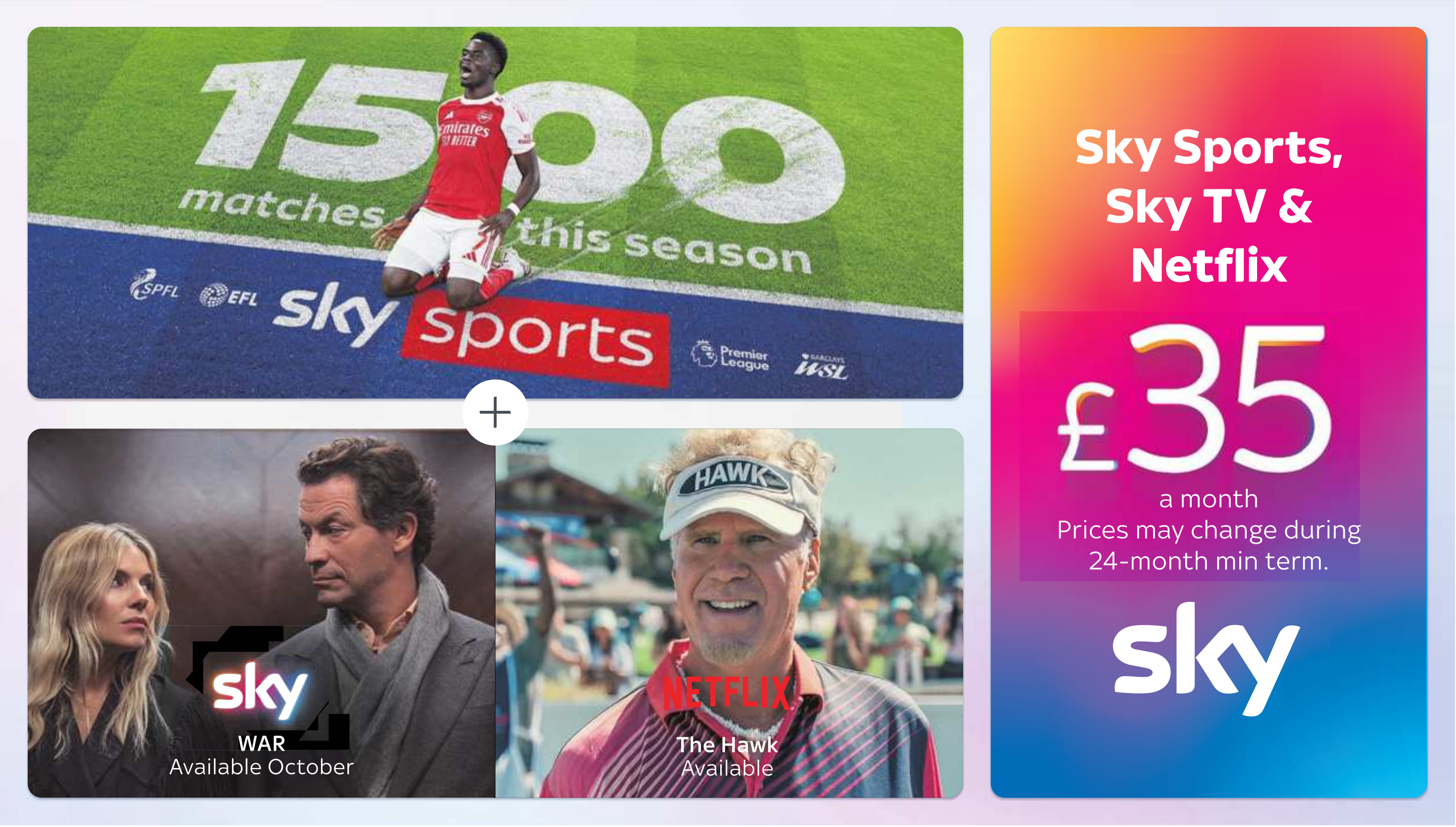
Erasmus needed 80 minutes from a number of core players — there's always a core in any great team — who had been absent either through injuries or disciplinary bans. His recovering fly half, Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, lasted 80 minutes.

He endured one of his ugliest afternoons in Test rugby yet wasn't substituted. Instead he was shifted to full back where he could play out the entire game. Aphelele Fassi, the regular full back, made way despite the fly half's flaky afternoon. This was a selection geared towards the future and not the immediate issues in front of the coach. When André Esterhuizen, the inside centre, suffered a head injury minutes later the full back returned and the talismanic No 10 reverted to the 10/12 role that he shared with Handré Pollard.

In the second row, Eben Etzebeth's return to the Test arena was for a full 80 minutes. Before the gouging incident in Cardiff, the veteran was being used a little more sparingly but Buenos Aires was the last chance to test his fitness before the first Test against the All Blacks. These were managerial decisions geared primarily towards winning in a fortnight, not hanging on under the blue Argentine skies.

It can be argued that a manager in Erasmus's position doesn't have to worry about the noise that circles other coaches. It can also be argued that this mix-and-match policy, geared ever towards distant priorities and not the next scoreboard, is the reason why one side can maximise their resources while the other seems to be attempting to climb the rugby peaks incapable of seeing beyond the next step.

We love Test matches for their great traditions and rugby adores its traditions but, traditions or not, some internationals are more important than others. Much more.



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Rashford's back … but will he stay?

ASH DONELON/MANCHESTER UNITED/GETTY IMAGES

Rashford meets fans in Ireland as he joins up with United training for the first time since his Barcelona loan

Charlotte Duncker

When Marcus Rashford walked out of Manchester United's training ground last summer, to sign on loan for Barcelona, many thought that was the end for him at his boyhood club.

"I wish them all the best and hope they are successful in the future," were his parting words.

On the face of it a happy end to a situation that had turned sour, allowing both parties to move on. But football has a funny way of bringing people back together.

So while the writing looked on the wall in December 2024 when he was substituted, and subsequently ignored, by the former United head coach Ruben Amorim against Viktoria Plzen, he is now preparing for a reunion with his team-mates and a potential game against the man who forced his exile as United play Amorim's AC Milan on Saturday in a friendly.

Rashford will make his return as part of United's training group in Maynooth, Co Kildare, today before a pre-season game against Leeds United at Croke Park in Dublin on Wednesday.

Initial plans for open training were shelved which means there will be no added spotlight on the 28-year-old as he beds back into the group, and that is likely to suit everyone as they work out how he is going to fit in going forward. For much of the past 18 months this is a situation that neither side would have expected to be in.

But, with Barcelona deciding against paying the €30 million option-to-buy clause in the loan deal and instead signing Anthony Gordon and Karim Adeyemi to cover Rashford's position on the wing, the door was closed on a reunion with Hansi Flick.

"He is a fantastic player and a fantastic person," Flick, the Barcelona head coach, said recently about Rashford. "The team miss him, I will miss him, but it is life. This is what we have to accept."

As it stands there has been interest from numerous other clubs, including some of United's Premier League rivals, but nothing concrete.

It is understood Rashford would prefer not to move to Turkey, where Fenerbahce have shown interest, or Saudi Arabia as he still has ambitions to play for England.

United have no interest in loaning him out again and his £325,000-a-week wages are a stumbling block for a number of teams who have looked at a permanent transfer. There is no indication he would be willing to take a pay cut to force a move, and why should he? It was the club who handed him that contract in 2023 and it still has two years to run.

So with three weeks remaining of the transfer window the most likely option appears to be that Rashford will stay and fight for his place at his boyhood club. Of course the main obstacle in Amorim has now departed, with Michael Carrick taking charge, which should ease some of the tension, but there are still some key figures involved in the decision to ostracise him from first-team training last summer who remain at the club.

Rashford is believed to have a good relationship with Carrick. He played with the former midfielder under Louis van Gaal and has already been coached and managed by the 45-year-old, first when he was assistant to José Mourinho and then when he took temporary charge after Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was sacked in November 2021.

But how things are going to pan out this time, nobody knows. His shirt number was given to Matheus Cunha last summer and he is no longer guaranteed a place in the starting XI. There is also a feeling among some supporters that he has performed better in the past 18 months while on loan because he needed a fresh start elsewhere, and that his time at United had come to a natural end, but only time is going to tell if that is correct.

If he can replicate the form he showed in Barcelona (25 goal contributions) there is no doubt he can be an asset for Carrick. United would not be able to find someone of that calibre for the £26 million (€30 million) price tag that was put on his head if they were to have to go out and find a replacement.

Should he stay, it is set to impact United's transfer plans going into the final few weeks of the window. They had been looking into signing a left-sided attacker and potentially another forward but Rashford's return would likely negate the need to strengthen there because he can play in both of those positions.

What this decision will look like a few weeks into the campaign remains to be seen but all sides will be hoping it works out for the better.

Kane expected to extend stay in Munich

Constantin Eckner

Harry Kane is expected to extend his contract with Bayern Munich until 2029, with the German champions planning talks with the England captain this week.

Bayern, who are due to return from their pre-season tour in Asia, are not planning to make any significant change to Kane's wages. He is Bayern's top earner alongside the Germany midfielder Jamal Musiala, with both players earning a base salary of about £21.5 million per year.

Kane, 33, was not part of Bayern's pre-season tour to South Korea and Hong Kong, where they beat Aston Villa 2-1 on Friday. Instead, Kane returned home after England's 6-4 win over France in the World Cup third-place play-off match in Miami and will meet up with his club team-mates later this week.

The England captain was previously linked with Barcelona, after the departure of Robert Lewandowski to MLS side Chicago Fire, but it is understood that Bayern have not received any serious inquiries recently. They never entertained the idea of selling Kane this summer, even though he has entered the final year of his present deal.

Kane has won two Bundesliga titles with Bayern since leaving Tottenham

Kane and his family feel comfortable in Munich and he continues to perform at a high level. He scored 61 goals in 51 games across all competitions for Bayern last season, increasing his club tally to 146 goals since his move from Tottenham Hotspur in 2023.

Kane has won his first significant pieces of silverware with Bayern, claiming the Bundesliga title in 2024-25 and 2025-26. However, the main outstanding ambition for player and club remains the Champions League, which the German champions most recently won in 2020. Last season, Bayern were eliminated in the semi-finals by the back-to-back winners Paris Saint-Germain.

"It hurts now but you can't be judged on just one game," Kane said after Bayern's 6-5 loss on aggregate. "From our perspective, we can be proud of what we've achieved so far. We're always striving for improvement."

While the expectation at one point was that Kane may return to England and attempt to break Alan Shearer's Premier League goal record — Kane has 213 to Shearer's 260 — he is keen to win more silverware with Bayern.

Kane is the odds-on favourite to win this year's Ballon d'Or. Despite losing out on the Champions League and World Cup, with semi-final exits in both competitions, Kane has proved once again that he is one of the deadliest strikers in football.

Aston Villa in talks to sign Palhinha, 31, from Bayern

Gary Jacob, Paul Joyce

Aston Villa are in talks to sign the Bayern Munich midfielder João Palhinha, who spent last season on loan at Tottenham Hotspur.

The German club would prefer to sell the 31-year-old, who joined from Fulham for £47 million two years ago.

Palhinha played 45 times in all competitions while on loan at Spurs last season but the north London club decided against exercising an option to sign him permanently.

Lucas Digne, the France full back, has agreed a three-year deal to join Paris Saint-Germain for a fee of £7 million. Digne made 182 appearances for Aston Villa since joining from Everton in 2022 and played a key part in last season's Europa League triumph.

Everton and **Crystal Palace** are progressing on a swap deal involving Dwight McNeil and Brennan Johnson. The transfer would not involve any additional money and is a straight exchange of the players. Medicals could take place as early as today.

McNeil, 26, had looked set to move to Selhurst Park on deadline day in January only for a loan deal, which included a £20 million obligation to buy the player from Everton, to be aborted at the 11th hour. Johnson, 25, the Wales international, only moved to Palace from Tottenham for £35 million in January but failed to score in 26 games.

Fulham have agreed a deal worth £26 million, plus an additional £4 million in add-ons, to sign the **Southampton** midfielder Shea Charles. Manchester City will be due some money from Charles's expected move due to a sell-on clause included when he moved to Southampton in 2023.

Como have signed Trevoh Chalobah from **Chelsea** for an initial £25.7 million plus £5.1 million in add-ons. The 27-year-old defender has agreed a five-year contract.

Walker vows: I won't become

Championship wingers will target 36-year-old but Burnley defender tells **Paul Joyce** he's not going to be made to look a fool

Finotive One

Kyle Walker reeled off a list of ambitions for the forthcoming season one by one. Some centred upon the collective, such as helping Burnley to earn promotion straight back to the Premier League, and others were a little more personal.

The right back, with 96 England caps and six Premier League titles among the many accolades on a packed CV, knows he will have a target on his back, as wingers in the Championship will be desperate to run rings around a decorated rival and leave him embarrassed in their slipstream.

Walker may now be 36, but the idea of being made to look foolish on a football pitch remains anathema to him.

"I think they try to create, what is it called, memes now?" he says with a chuckle. "They'll try and create memes out of me and I can assure you that I am not becoming anyone's meme.

"So when you come against me, I'll give it 100 per cent. If you beat me on the day, you know, you shake hands at the end of the game and you say it's a good game. I'm not going to become a meme."

The last line lingered and spoke of Walker's continued appetite for a challenge, albeit one he hoped that he would not have to embrace.

While the pattern of Burnley's recent existence has been yo-yoing between the second tier and the top flight, relegation last season left Walker back where it all began.

He started his senior career at Sheffield United in 2008 yearning to rub shoulders with the elite, but last played in the Championship in 2010-11 when his time at Tottenham Hotspur was punctuated by a loan spell at Queens Park Rangers.

Happy memories of that period abound as he played his part in a promotion campaign, but so much will have changed that he has sought advice from a former Manchester City team-mate and Burnley manager about what to expect now.

"I've spoken to Vinny, Vincent Kompany," explained Walker, who was a guest at the EFL 2026-27 season launch at the National Football Museum in Manchester.

"I asked how did he find it. He says it's difficult but it is also very enjoyable.

"You become a big fish again, and you get a little bit more of the ball. It's a bit more of the game that I'm used to playing from my time at Manchester City.

"When Vinny went up [with Burnley] I think they broke 100 points and kind of tore the Championship apart, so I'm hoping we can do the same as what they went and did that season [2022-23].

"It was fantastic [when I last played in the Championship] because we won every game. It was an emergency loan, I'm going to call it. Neil Warnock took me and I played every game and then went to Aston Villa for the last part of the season. I fell back in love with football a bit.

"I wouldn't say I'd fallen out of love, but I didn't play as many games as I wanted [at Tottenham after joining in 2009]. And then Harry [Redknapp] let me go back on loan to QPR and get some games under my belt.

"I loved it. It was something that I needed to do personally to make that step up to the Premier League. Playing in the Championship — it grounds you, but it also teaches you. It can be very humbling as well.

"That was a big part of it. Having experienced players around me: Fitz Hall, Shaun Derry, Clint Hill, Paddy Kenny. It was a good dressing room to be around, I can tell you that.

"Would I have ever thought that I would experience the things I have in football back when I was at QPR in 2010? Hell no, it was not possible! So I definitely am at peace, but I'm so hungry for more, and that's this season with Burnley."

Burnley host another relegated team in West Ham United at Turf Moor on Sunday in a mouthwatering opener and Walker now walks in the shoes of those names he has listed. He is the one with the experience, the one a team-mate will look towards when the going gets a little tough.

He is comfortable with accepting that responsibility. Walker is intent upon trying to maintain his own high standards even if the glare of the spotlight will no longer be as harsh as when he was challenging for the biggest honours under Pep Guardiola at City and playing in European Championship finals with England.

"The scrutiny is not as big, but I think then you probably scrutinise yourself more because you're so used to achieving and winning a lot more games," said Walker, who scored the winning penalty as Burnley held their nerve to beat Notts County in a Carabao Cup shoot-out success on Saturday. "You look back at yourself and think, 'What could I have done?'

"Last season, most of all, it was about the mental game. I can play the game of football; that didn't stop just because I went to Burnley. But mentally it was different and something that I had to channel into. But then that's something I can pass on to the younger players now and hopefully give my experience.

"Success in anything is about mentality. Talent gets you so far, but mentality and wanting to do well — not just in big games, not just when it's on TV, not when it's sunny and the fans are there in their 30,000s cheering your name — it's when it's raining, it's not on TV, it's a quarter to eight on a Tuesday night and the wind's swirling around.

"That's about rolling your sleeves up, getting dirty, and making sure that we can get the three points.

"I hope I am looked at as a leader. I hope people look at me and follow in my footsteps and things I do around the training ground. I set standards for myself.

"If I have to get motivated to play football, I should stay in bed in the morning. Motivation has never been a factor in it. The only thing that I've always promised myself is that when the lightbulb switches off in my head, and that football becomes a burden, I'll stop playing football because I don't want to ruin that."

Clearly, he is not at that point yet. Walker retired from England last

a meme

RICHARD SELLERS/PA MEDIA; TIMES PHOTOGRPAHER BRADLEY ORMESHER

Walker, celebrating with the Burnley goalkeeper Max Weiss after they beat Notts County in a penalty shoot-out to reach the Carabao Cup second round on Saturday, won six Premier League titles with Manchester City, top, having started his senior career with Sheffield United in the Championship, above

season but still found Wayne Rooney championing his qualities amid the saga over who should play right back at the World Cup.

A summer off has allowed him to reset, a little like Burnley themselves who have appointed Nicky Hayen, formerly of Genk, as their new head coach following the departure of Scott Parker in April. Overtures to Craig Bellamy, the Wales head coach, collapsed.

Walker describes Hayen, 45, as being "direct" but someone who has not tried to overload the squad with new ideas, pointing out "too much information sometimes kills it".

There have been significant departures, such as Jaidon Anthony to Brentford, Maxime Estève to RB Leipzig, Florentino to Ipswich Town and Loum Tchaouna to Coventry City, but Walker has remained.

"How it ended last season, getting relegated, wasn't ideal for me," he added. "It's something I didn't like and it left a sour taste in my mouth. It's something I want to put right, not just for myself but for the fans who had to deal with last season and for the players who have stuck around.

"We have an obligation to put it right. It's not just a responsibility; it's our job. Things aren't always going to go as planned. This season might not go as planned. It might not be as plain sailing as we all want it to be.

"But I feel with the quality we have in the dressing room, that's what we should be doing: getting promoted and going back to the Premier League.

"Getting Burnley promoted is another trophy that I want to add to my collection. It's something that I want to put on my CV."

We can only run for 30 minutes, admits Iraola

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

Andoni Iraola's Anfield bow as head coach came amid the familiar debate of just how much Alexander Isak and Florian Wirtz contributed to Liverpool's performance.

On this occasion, however, he would have been happier to have the discussion. Isak opened the scoring against Monaco yesterday and then he and Wirtz were involved as Liverpool scrambled a second, the Swede lying by the goalline having helped to win the ball as Wirtz profited from the confusion in the visiting ranks. Wirtz was credited with the goal over the PA system but replays suggested his teammate had the final touch.

"We both got a touch on the ball, but honestly I don't know who got the first one or the last one," Isak said. Afterwards, Wirtz claimed he was none the wiser either.

Liverpool's season will be heavily shaped by whether the duo can start to dovetail more effectively. The plan was always for Isak and Wirtz to take over the scoring burden from Mohamed Salah and that is a necessity now given the Egyptian's exit.

It was noticeable how close Isak and Wirtz, deployed as a No 10, played together. Some of Wirtz's passing was a delight and they appear to have been working on their understanding. Liverpool will hope this was a sign of things to come.

QUICK IN ATTACK BUT DEFENSIVE FRAILTIES ON SHOW AGAIN

It is clear Liverpool will attack more quickly this season — the first pass is often forward, for example — but it looks as though they will be susceptible from a defensive viewpoint. Here, they sloppily threw away that two-goal advantage to lose 3-2, following on from last weekend's 4-2 loss to Leeds United in Chicago when they had also led 2-0.

That they will be entertaining to watch is in some respects a step forward after last season, when the disconnect between supporters and the team made for a moribund atmosphere at Anfield. Ultimately that cost Arne Slot his job and Iraola's priority has to be restoring the harmony that should exist between the players and the paying public.

Víctor Muñoz, the £34.5 million signing from Osasuna, made his debut on the left wing and the sight of teenager Rio Ngumoha making a nuisance of himself on the right bodes well.

Iraola candidly conceded his side ran out of steam after 30 minutes and do not have the energy levels at present to play with the intensity that he wants.

"We played a good first half, especially a good 30 minutes," he said. "Right now we probably don't have much more, in terms of the levels required to play like this, and they were much better in the second half. They deserved to turn around the game.

"I think the ones [for whom] it was their first game, and even the ones who are playing the second game, they had energy. The problem right now is they don't have the energy for 90 minutes. We need more training with them."

WHO WILL PARTNER VAN DIJK?

Barcelona's Ronald Araújo was beginning his medical yesterday as Liverpool worked towards finalising his loan move which contains an option, rather than an obligation, to sign him permanently for £47 million.

The Uruguay centre back has not been pinpointed as a potential long-term signing. Liverpool hope that he will provide a sticking plaster as the rest of their defenders recover from fitness issues.

Virgil van Dijk made his first appearance of pre-season and is the club's only fit, recognised centre back at present, with Joe Gomez, Giovanni Leoni and Jérémy Jacquet all missing. Jacquet is expected to resume training this week, but has not played a minute of the four pre-season games and his season with Rennes was curtailed by a shoulder injury in February.

Van Dijk conceded a penalty from which Monaco's Aleksandr Golovin scored and was involved in a mix-up with Ryan Gravenberch that led to Mika Biereth equalising. Van Dijk had departed by the time Monaco claimed a headed winner via Paris Brunner and the centre-back partnership by then was Wataru Endo and Luke Chambers.

It feels like it would be a leap of faith to blood Jacquet at St James' Park in Liverpool's Premier League opener even if he is able to face the Italian club Como on Sunday, which leaves Araújo or Endo as possible partners for Van Dijk.

SET-PIECE WOES PERSIST

Monaco's winner came from a corner, with Brunner rising highest, and it has been a familiar sight for Liverpool. In the loss to Leeds, they conceded twice from throw-ins, with Dominic Calvert-Lewin profiting at the back post.

Liverpool conceded a league high 20 goals (excluding penalties) from set pieces last season along with Crystal Palace and Bournemouth — who were coached by Iraola last term. His assistants, Tommy Elphick and Shaun Cooper, have been entrusted with improving matters, along with Lewis Mahoney who was part of Slot's backroom staff, and it is imperative that they do so.

Having more senior players available will help but such a persistent shortcoming determined Iraola's big day went from "lovely" to "frustrating".

Isak celebrates after scoring Liverpool's opener at Anfield

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Mayor open to stadium deal

taxpayers at present. West Ham's tenancy agreement has long been described as the "deal of the century" because of how little the club pay. It was about £4.4 million when they were playing in the Premier League but relegation to the Championship will result in that figure being halved this season. Meanwhile, the next accounts of London Stadium LLP, the GLA subsidiary that runs the facility, will show a cost of £19 million to the taxpayer.

It is why Khan would be open to at least examining the possible financial benefit of offloading what is essentially a distressed asset. In a statement, a spokesman told The Times: "The Mayor would welcome any discussions regarding the London Stadium that would deliver greater value for money for Londoners."

There are other factors to consider. UK Athletics has 40 years left on a concession agreement deal that gives the organisation access to the stadium for events such as the London Diamond League, which has consistently proven to be a 60,000 sell-out and is now turning a profit thanks to the efforts of Athletics Ventures, the new partnership between the governing body, the London Marathon and the Great Run Company.

Athletics could certainly use the money if a stadium purchase involved financial compensation, perhaps as much as £20 million, but Khan may yet insist that any structural modernisation still allows for a conversion to an athletics arena. That said, Khan is also backing the £130 million regeneration project at the National Sports Centre in Crystal Palace, which could yet offer London an alternative venue for elite athletics. Sources have suggested Staveley would want any structural changes to be tailored only to football.

In an interview with Bloomberg last week, she hinted at a possible stadium purchase. "Whatever club we take, there'll be a big property play as well," Staveley said, having also been linked with a possible bid for Tottenham Hotspur, in an episode of Bloomberg's *Leaders with Francine Lacqua* that was recorded before West Ham confirmed her agreement with the Gold family last Saturday. "We won't just do a football-led. I just want a challenge, and that's what excites me. That's where you get value uplift — when you take something from seedling and allow it to grow."

First, of course, Staveley and the consortium she is fronting with her husband, Mehrdad Ghodoussi, have to see off the challenge of Kretinsky, the Czech billionaire owner of Royal Mail. It is a complex situation in the wake of David Sullivan's resignation as co-chairman, after allegations of sexual misconduct that he continues to deny.

As The Times first revealed, Kretinsky appeared to have struck a deal with Vanessa Gold, David Gold's daughter, to purchase 16 per cent of the family's 25 per cent stake, increasing his overall stake to 43 per cent to make him the club's majority shareholder ahead of Sullivan. But this month Staveley, 53, made an improved offer for the full 25 per cent stake that was accepted by the Gold family, with Kretinsky then manoeuvring himself to take up his first refusal on purchasing the same shares.

Adding that to his present stake would take him beyond 50.1 per cent, therefore leaving him liable for a formal takeover offer. But he countered that by shifting two per cent to another Czech businessman, Jakub Havrlant, even though there are suggestions such a move could face certain legal challenges.

Sport

My advice to 'Mauler'

Sharron Davies tells Joe Marler what it's like to be a Gladiator

Page 46

ALAN WALTER.//ARSENAL FC/GETTY IMAGES

Guimarães introduced himself to Arsenal fans before his new side's pre-season friendly against Dortmund having completed a big-money move from Newcastle

Bruno 'next level' for Arsenal

Arteta says £75m midfielder is signing that will help Premier League champions reach new heights

Gary Jacob

Mikel Arteta believes Bruno Guimarães is the type of signing who can help the Premier League champions scale even greater heights.

The Brazil midfielder, 28, was presented at the Emirates Stadium before yesterday's pre-season meeting with Borussia Dortmund having completed his £75 million move from Newcastle United.

Arteta said after the 3-2 defeat that he is impressed by Guimarães's fighting spirit, the fact he can play either as a deep-lying midfielder or as an attacking No 8 and his ambition.

"I'm delighted to have him," Arteta said. "Why? Well, we see very clearly, especially the energy that he brought immediately to the training ground, the hunger, the desire to come here and create a big history at the club.

"And that's the ambition that we need. We want to go to the next level and are very, very much convinced that we're going to need players with such a personality, desire and character to push everybody inside the organisation to go even higher."

Arsenal begin their title defence in the Premier League's curtain-raiser against newly promoted Coventry City a week on Friday. Arteta looks likely to begin the season without two key defenders after admitting that Jurrien Timber is "weeks away" from returning to the side.

The Arsenal manager was unable to provide a more exact timescale for the right back, who had a groin operation in June. Arteta is already without William Saliba for several months at least after the centre back suffered a back injury while playing for France against Spain in the World Cup semi-final.

Arsenal have been looking for a centre back who can also operate at right back but have been unwilling to meet Aston Villa's £60 million valuation for Ezri Konsa. Gabriel Martinelli and Gabriel Jesus, second-half substitutes against Dortmund, both appear likely to leave Arsenal. Galatasaray have shown interest in Martinelli while Napoli are tracking Jesus.

Staveley eyes stadium deal

Matt Lawton Chief Sports Correspondent

Amanda Staveley would explore purchasing the London Stadium if she is successful in buying a significant stake in West Ham United, with the mayor of London, Sir Sadiq Khan, open to "any discussions" on the matter.

While it remains to be seen if Staveley is successful in her bid to buy the shares that belong to the family of the late David Gold — she faces opposition from co-owner Daniel Kretinsky — the British businesswoman who masterminded the Saudi takeover of Newcastle United is keen to explore a possible deal with the Greater London Authority (GLA).

The Times understands any deal would come with certain stipulations. Khan has been at the forefront of the London bid for the 2029 World Athletics Championships and any major design alterations to the stadium would have to be delayed until after that date, should the capital be awarded the event next month.

But the stadium, built for the 2012 Olympics, could be available for as little as £50 million given how much it costs

Continued on page 51

England hope Gay will be fit

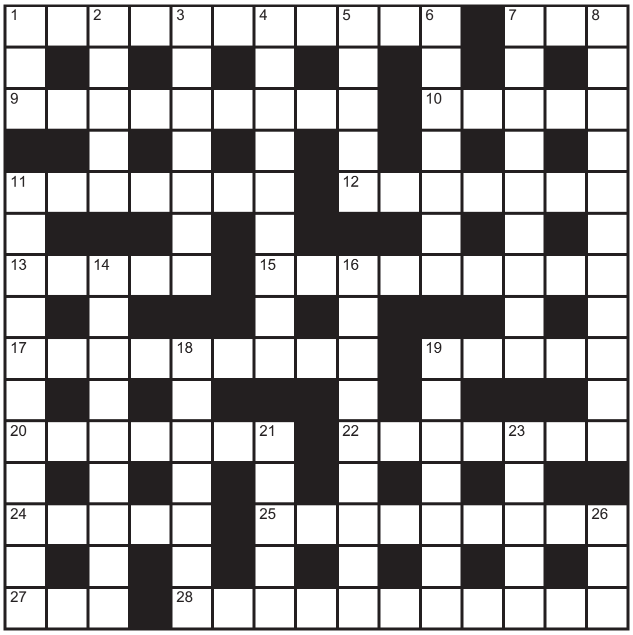
Elizabeth Ammon

England are hopeful Emilio Gay will be fit for the first Test against Pakistan after a scan revealed no serious injury to his right shoulder.

The opener retired hurt while batting for Durham against Middlesex in the One-Day Cup on Friday.

Gay, 26, will need to be assessed further to ascertain any residual pain or discomfort while batting or fielding but it appears likely that he will be able to resume his opening partnership with Ben Duckett when the Pakistan series begins at Headingley on August 19.

Times Crossword 29,617



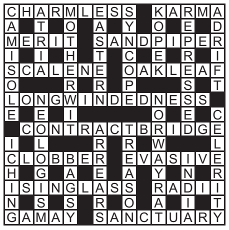
ACROSS

1 Nobbled horse – a thing attempting to unseat leader? (4,7)
7 Manner of one expected to succeed on radio (3)
9 Puritan concealing disgusting source of extreme advantage (9)
10 Beat corporation power, securing hope initially (5)
11 Drew near to line twisting around castle (7)
12 Song I'm obliged to follow that is limited by technique (7)
13 Black king evading opponent's piece? (5)
15 Software permitted water plant to be trimmed in part of orchard (5,4)
17 Lack of knowledge? An opening for college in blighted region (9)
19 Golf beset by dreadful sound of woe (5)
20 Statement from ally indicating religious position (7)
22 Endless drama in accommodation cost? Move elsewhere (7)
24 Biblical character reflected one lament (5)
25 Unexpected money club's carrying round? It's on the table (5,4)
27 Beam of light ready to be periodically blocked (3)
28 I am mostly the person that's ill-disposed? (11)

DOWN

1 Joint payment arrangement includes one (3)
2 German linguist dour in broadcast (5)
3 Small group's small outing? (7)
4 Optical issue certainly apparent in damaged retina (9)
5 That woman starts to boss all in queen's place (5)
6 Salt turned up in stock (7)
7 Untrustworthy sort breaking trade rule (9)
8 Cup match perhaps cut short to fix substitute (11)
11 Noticed iron tainted cosmetic (11)
14 Information on each record linked to unknown family history (9)
16 Fix earlier account, deleting chapter in distress (9)
18 Practical approach is entrenched in field (7)
19 Pair of images: basin, then tiny gutted church (7)
21 With wicket falling, blocks snicks (5)
23 From the outset, not entirely too proud for love (2,3)
26 Fix cup match (3)

Prize solution 29,610



C	H	A	R	M	L	E	S	S		K	A	R	M	A
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M	E	R	I	T		S	A	N	D	P	I	P	E	R
I		I		H		T		C		E		R		I
S	C	A	L	E	N	E		O	A	K	L	E	A	F
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N		S		S		R		O		A		I		T
G	A	M	A	Y		S	A	N	C	T	U	A	R	Y

Check today's answers by ringing 0905 757 0141 by midnight. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

The winners of Prize Crossword No 29,610 are
L Dare, New Malden, Greater London
P Kelly, Antrim, Co Antrim
M Kerr, Newtownabbey, Co Antrim
T Sutcliffe, London N4
J Veness, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

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TIMES2

August 10 | **2026**

'I like a laser. I do Botox. But I had my lip filler dissolved'

Olivia Attwood on her good, bad and 'grotesque' cosmetic tweakments

Meghan says ‘Harry loves bagpipes’ so why isn’t he at Balmoral?

Shane Watson

You may have seen the latest post on the Sussexes’ Instagram is a video of Harry and Meghan arriving at a charity do in British Columbia and passing through a passage lined with pipers in bonnets and kilts. The pipers aren’t playing — that’s part of the entertainment to come — just standing in a receiving line, and there’s nothing remarkable about the scene other than that the duke and duchess have taken the trouble to put it online and it features a giggling Meghan remarking that “my husband loves bagpipes!” She says this as if it’s a bit of a naughty secret, so everyone laughs and then Harry joins in: “So where are mine?” he jokes, referring to the pipes. “Pipes *and* drums, to be clear.”

Hmm. Once again we, the Sussex-watching public, are left scratching our heads and wondering... Why? Why is Harry in British Columbia chatting up a local pipes and drums band when he could be — when he would have been — at this very moment in the heart of bagpipe country immersed in the real thing from morning to night?

What’s he doing fannying about listening to an average band play *Ashokan Farewell* (guaranteed) and *Mull of Kintyre* (probably), in between a charity auction, a conjuror and a comedian, or whatever, when he might have woken to the sound of pipes this morning, listened to massed pipes and drums at the Braemar Games, sipped a cocktail on the terrace with a piper piping on the ramparts, and had a piper piping outside his bathroom while he got ready for dinner?

It’s August, when the King and Queen are hosting at Balmoral, and while it may not be everyone’s cup of tea (Cherie Blair famously struggled; *The Crown* led us to believe that Margaret Thatcher brought the wrong footwear) if you love pipes and your father owns an estate in the heart of piping country with access to the best pipers money can buy (the King loves bagpipes too) then now is your moment. You definitely don’t want to miss it. It only comes around once a year, and it was Harry himself who so tactlessly said: “I don’t know how much longer my father has.”

You do wonder sometimes if it’s us imagining that Harry is cast adrift in the US, a fish out of water with a tank full of banter and no one to share it with but the husband of the woman who makes jewellery that Meghan has shown an interest in promoting. Could it be that we’re projecting and there’s really not much Harry misses about the UK, especially in summer, other than maybe summer pudding and fishing on the Dee and sweet black and tans and billiard fives and Highland Games? But just when we’re coming round to thinking Harry might be sort of OK in California, we get a glimpse of something that looks a lot like buried homesickness.

When it comes to the country he used to call home, Harry’s a bit like the man who can’t stop talking about the woman he claims to have got over years ago. Meghan, you know, thanks God every day that she doesn’t have to put up with that cramped Frogmore Cottage, let alone head to the place of turrets and midges and (old, musty) tartan upholstery. Meghan, you can be pretty sure, is never happier than at a gala with status-curated placement, tasteful table-scaping and farm-to-table foodstuffs, crammed with fellow activists, entrepreneurs and female founders who appreciate a bespoke one-shoulder dress. She only visited Balmoral once, in August 2018, a couple of months after her wedding, and like many before her will have found the castle to be peculiar, stuffy, cold and more than a bit of an anachronism.

> In Spare he said the estate was ‘simply paradise’

Who knows if it’s been preserved in aspic since QEII’s death; if they still have kippers and kidneys for breakfast, if guests are expected to walk on the hill in all weathers, if the men of the family wear a kilt and a heathery coloured sweater when in residence? Who knows if kick the can is compulsory, as is contributing something to the seasonal jigsaw and playing charades/The Game while nursing a sticky after dinner?

Now that Charles is in the house it may be less Tupperware and Gentleman’s Relish on Carr’s water biscuits and more tahini and wilted spinach with a sea trout fillet. He’s probably fixed the plumbing so you can guarantee more than two consecutive baths. Maybe he’s even converted the tack room into a sauna, you never know. But Harry — who, let’s not forget, described the King’s Scottish estate in his 2023 autobiography *Spare* as “simply paradise” — would not have required any modernisation of the royal residence to tempt him back.

True he’s had to forswear shooting — so no Glorious Twelfth for him — and he’d have to get himself a new kilt since he surely burnt everything before he escaped on the freedom flight including his morning coat (why else was he wearing Dior to his father’s coronation?). But otherwise there’s no impediment, no reason on earth for the Sussexes not to be in Harry’s favourite place; the main thing standing in the way of Meghan’s enjoyment will surely have been the miserable Scottish summer and that’s now history too.

I love the pipes and if I were Harry listening to the British Columbian lot massacre *The Black Isle* I would have been on my phone, at the gala function table, messaging Papa, “I miss home, please can we come... swear we’ll behave” while simultaneously summoning the jet and finding a dog sitter. There’s only one Balmoral, there are only so many days left in August.

It’s absolutely absurd to me to say Chris Packham is autistic

Uta Frith helped to build the theory of the ‘autistic spectrum’. Now she’s under fire for saying it’s reached the point of being meaningless. By Andrew Billen

One morning in 1947, deep in rural Germany, Uta Frith walked herself to her first day at primary school. A school inspector welcomed the new cohort by asking who among them was the cleverest. Frith stepped forward. Everyone laughed but her academic career would prove her right. Arriving in London in its full Sixties swing, she studied psychology at its University College, became an expert on autism and has helped to build the theory of the “autistic spectrum” for the neurodevelopmental variation that affects communication.

A year after becoming a dame in 2012, she received the greater honour of being a guest on *Desert Island Discs*. There she was hymned not only for setting up a network for women scientists called Science and Shopping but for debunking the notion that bad parenting by “refrigerator mothers” caused their children’s autism. Look instead, she said, at the genetics.

But being brilliant does not make you always right. This week Frith hit the news for an essay in Psychological Medicine that insisted far too many people are being diagnosed with autism. Primary care records, for instance, clocked an almost ninefold increase in new cases from 1998 to 2018. Some in the field were not happy. The National Autistic Society’s Mel Merritt called it an “unhelpful and false choice to pit autistic people against each other”. But when Frith also said that the autism spectrum had become so wide that it had “collapsed” to the point of “diagnostic meaninglessness”, she appeared to be arguing not merely against the consensus but with her earlier self.

The professor and I are having afternoon coffee in the exquisitely cultured house with vertiginous bookshelves she has shared for more than 30 years with her husband, Chris Frith, a fellow neuroscientist. (They celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary this month.) If there is a spectrum, she is not on it: she is outspoken but also warm, funny, kind. She has baked us a marmalade cake and gives me a copy of *Two Heads*, a 2022 comic book she wrote with Chris and one of her two sons: three quarters brain science, one quarter joint memoir. It was here 13 years ago, I tell her, that she raised with a previous interviewer the possibility of autism’s overdiagnosis. “Really?” she says, surprised, in her distantly German accent. “It has been very gradual for me to get onto this line that I am on now. It has not come overnight and I’ve not spoken out publicly for a long time but I really thought, this has gone too far.”

> People say, ‘I was diagnosed and now I think that was wrong’

The only thing she would qualify from 2013 is this: the problem is not so much overdiagnosis, which suggests perfectly normal people are being told they are autistic. It is misdiagnosis: something is making life hard for these people — it is just not autism.

Two years ago she gave a lecture in Denmark that covered many of the points she is making now. Then there were nearly 190,000 people in England awaiting an autism assessment, a

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Uta Frith. Below: Chris Packham

queue that would stretch from London to Brighton. But why, she asked, did people crave this diagnosis? What if society's greater appreciation of diversity and inclusion, the increased media coverage of autism, poorly constructed online diagnostic questionnaires, attractive autistic savants in dramas (from Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man* in 1988 to *The Bridge*'s Saga Noren), and the insistence that autistic people were as "normal" as neurotypicals had prompted the leap in demand?

After all, the diagnosis of autism in children aged zero to five was showing a much less noticeable rise. But, I noticed, she phrased her points then as mere possibilities. She says she had to be cautious. "There are people who would feel really hurt. And I don't want to do that. If I had just my colleagues to talk to, I would be less cautious, but I know that many colleagues would not agree with me."

At 85, she is long retired. "It makes an enormous difference that I'm no longer beholden to certain funding agencies or need to get grants and need to be in with the charities." She says her younger colleagues who have talked to her recently say they feel they can't say anything about it. "Which is sort of sad, isn't it?"

She gets social media abuse but people are polite when they write to her. "Actually I've had a few cases — still very few — but very interesting people who have written to me and said, 'I've been diagnosed in adulthood or whatever as autistic and now I think that was wrong.' They were desperately wanting diagnosis, felt very relieved and then at some point afterwards felt it wasn't right and now have a much more sceptical outlook. I wonder how many such people exist."

What she knows for certain is that the teenagers and adults who now call themselves autistic barely resemble the "beautiful but so different" autistic infants Frith first encountered in her career, children who would struggle to surmise what a person they were talking to was thinking because, in the jargon, they lacked "a theory of mind".

> I would be humble enough to know that science is always uncertain

I mention the naturalist Chris Packham, whom I interviewed a few years ago. He was diagnosed in 2005 with what was then called Asperger's syndrome. "He cannot be autistic in my opinion," Frith interrupts. "It is just absolutely absurd to me that somebody who can communicate as brilliantly as he does — that is what I call a blatant contra-indication."

But talking to him, I say, I found him a bit literal-minded. If you pay him a compliment, he takes it at face value. "It's part of that charming personality. I mean, he probably is a bit obsessive," she says.

He may relate better to animals than people? "I think we could just say people are animals too." (I later email Packham to warn him about Frith's comments. He thanks me for the "heads-up".)

I wonder whether the American Psychiatric Association removing Asperger's syndrome — sometimes seen as "autism lite" — from its catalogue of mental conditions in 2013 encouraged the rise of autism diagnoses. The main reason for the APA's decision, she says, was a drive towards simplicity: "Let's have just one category." From then on the condition was divided not by symptom but by the levels of support those who live with it seemed to need.

She thinks the next edition of the association's manual will probably divide autism into subgroups. But some now defined as autistic may not fit any subgroup? "Well, if it was still called autism, it would have to be type B or something," she replies, conceding a little ground.

For many, she argues, autism is welcome as the least worst diagnosis. "There is a diagnosis known as borderline personality disorder and it's really hated by people who get it. Quite a lot of them are now diagnosed autistic and they say, 'Thank God!'"

Some have wheeled through other diagnoses — anorexia, perhaps, or obsessive compulsive disorder — and for them being called autistic instead is a relief: it feels authentic and addresses their whole selves. "It really is quite reminiscent of 19th-century accounts of religious conversions. You know, where people say, 'I was this lost soul but now I've seen the light.'"

So it's like me saying, "I am so happy. I have transitioned and really am a woman"? "Yes, a bit like that. If it makes you happy, why should I contradict you? That kind of thing. But it's not science."

I am reminded of interviewing Holly Smale, the author of the *Geek Girl* books. Having been misdiagnosed as bipolar she was delighted with the later diagnosis of autism. "Autism is the answer to the question I have been asking my entire life," she wrote in The Times. "It is not something to be 'fixed' or 'cured'. My brain is simply wired differently."

Might not autism explain why Smale felt depressed and was unable to sustain relationships? "But how would it explain this? This is to me a big mystery. But it does give some kind of privileges. They can tell other people to 'jolly well take account of my disability', except they don't want to call it a disability. It's 'my difference, and you should be nice to me'."

Individually, Frith would not wish to strip people of their diagnoses. "I don't want to do that if the pure fact of a diagnosis can make you feel so satisfied and happy. But that's something that needs to be studied. I'm of course wondering how long that feeling lasts. We don't know."

Frith takes part responsibility for drama's flattering representations of autism in recent decades. In her 1989 book *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*, she proposed that Sherlock Holmes was a fictional prototype of an autistic person. Twenty years later came the BBC's spectrum-hugging *Sherlock*. Are there any good autistic detectives in real life? "Absolutely not."

As we talk, Chris Frith sits by his wife, occasionally joining in. They have a discussion about when brain science began. In her view Freud was a diversion, a neurologist who turned to therapeutic theory because his era lacked the tools to do the job. "We now have these [computer] imaging methods. But how ignorant we still are in relation to neuroscience! It really doesn't go much further back than 150 years or so. Would you date it further back?" she asks her husband. "Well, I'm sure the term neuroscience is even more recent than that. Doesn't it start with [David] Hubel and [Torsten] Wiesel in around 1960?" he replies.

But we do at least know — don't we? — that childhood autism has a genetic cause, a de novo mutation (a new one, not inherited). "Except that we don't have the proof of it. It's a work in progress," she confesses.

The mind remains a mystery, we agree, she from a position of having studied it all her life. "I think it's very good that people are interested. A discussion would be a good thing and I'm not wanting to say, 'I'm right and that's the way things should be going.' I think I would be humble enough to know that science is always uncertain."

And she admits, as an 85-year-old only marginally less assured than her six-year-old self, "I have changed my mind. There might be more refined ways of looking at autism; a rather holistic way, perhaps. So I would say: yes, I might be proved wrong. But there we are. That's science."

The running ick: Strava ruined my relationship

'What's your Strava?" he asked as I sipped my third Aperol of the night. "Can I follow you?" Strange question to be asked by the guy you fancy and, in retrospect, I should have interpreted it as a red flag. But he seemed fun, so I gave him my profile details on the fitness tracking app and allowed him to spend the rest of the evening showing me his.

Did I think there may be downsides to dating a man this invested in Strava? Yes, I did. But at the time all I could think was: is running really that much of an ick?

With more than 200 million users, Strava has become a social media platform on a par with Instagram and TikTok. You can post photos, join running groups and message on it — which was how he first asked me out on a date. The app, though, very quickly became the third person in our relationship. He spent hours analysing his feed, yet despised seeing his friends run faster than him, preferring instead to spot them taking days off. He was fixated on "kudos" (the Strava equivalent of Instagram likes) and beating his PB. Once, he even printed out his best 10km time and gave it to me. I tried to channel the mantra that all relationships involve compromise but I started finding his evangelical desire to turn me into one of his many Strava disciples unbearable.

Esme Gordon-Craig

In honesty, I too had been a Strava addict, so in addition to understanding the high you get from the app's many forms of external validation, I also knew I had no intention of relapsing. I would ask if we could run without Strava but he always refused. For him: if it's not on Strava it didn't happen. Not that we ever ran "together" — he didn't want me to spoil his Strava score. At least it meant I never had to be a part of his post-run Strava selfie.

I'd spent so long complaining about being single and expressing my desire for a guy who would be passionate about something that I struggled to get any sympathy from my girlfriends.

When it came to breaking up I couldn't bring myself to say that it was mainly, if not entirely, because of Strava. Instead, I fell back on clichés, telling him I didn't feel we were going in the same direction, that he was moving too fast and that I just couldn't keep up. From a certain perspective, I think it was the most honest break-up speech I've ever given.

Esme Gordon-Craig

What I’ve learnt? Not to treat your body like a wardrobe change

Promoted as ‘the new Cilla Black’, Olivia Attwood parlayed Love Island fame into a budding TV career. But her relationship with her appearance has been as complicated as her love life. By Julia Llewellyn Smith

COVER AND BELOW: SARAH CRESSWELL FOR THE TIMES AT 1 HOTEL MAYFAIR, LONDON; MAKE-UP: CAROLINE BARNES; STYLING: SUSIE LETHBRIDGE;

ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Olivia Attwood at the 1 Hotel, Mayfair. Above: with her partner Pete Wicks on Loose Women. Below: with her former boyfriend Bradley Dack

Olivia Attwood and I are tucked under a crisp duvet in the bedroom of a five-star Mayfair hotel suite. There’s nowhere else to sit; anyway, Attwood is “always cold — I’m the only person who loves the heatwave”. She’s musing on her rollercoaster year to date.

“Ironically, since January there’ve been so many days when I’ve wanted to fall apart, but professionally it’s been the strongest six months of my life,” she says. “It’s like that quote from *The Devil Wears Prada*: ‘When your personal life’s falling apart, it means you’re ready for promotion.’”

Attwood, 35, is a former public schoolgirl from Surrey who, in the nine years since she finished third in *Love Island*, has become one of British showbusiness’s hottest names, described by ITV as “the face of the future” and “the new Cilla Black”. She’s a regular on *Loose Women* and hosts various reality shows as well as two hit documentary series, *Olivia Attwood: Getting Filthy Rich*, about selling sex online, and the show we’re here to talk about today: *Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection*.

As an archetypal girl-boss millennial she also has numerous (more lucrative) side hustles: a cocktail brand, Savano (“Out of stock on Amazon!”); a podcast, *Olivia’s House* (70 million listeners over the past six months).

Then there’s her Instagram, which all year has charted her Burton-Tayloresque relationship with her husband, the Gillingham footballer Bradley Dack. Like all top reality-show graduates/influencers, Attwood is fluent in therapy speak and understands her duty to be as “authentic” as possible, sharing every grisly detail of her life with her 2.6 million followers.

“My job is very performative. I have a big audience of women in their thirties who are going through stuff like mine and I want to be honest with them. There are moments when [that’s] tough but I know what I signed up for. I don’t really remember life before all this.”

She and Dack had a turbulent on-off relationship since meeting in the influencer-favourite London club Libertine 12 years ago. Attwood ended things, complaining of infidelities, then, after *Love Island*, declared him reformed. In 2023 they married in a £200,000 wedding at a luxury London hotel in Knightsbridge (naturally), documented in an ITV reality show. It later emerged that the wedding itself was not legally binding because the hotel didn’t have a marriage licence. Yet in January Attwood announced she had left Dack.

I’ve been requested not to dwell on the split, yet it’s the first subject Attwood, who’s smart, funny and very likeable, brings up when she finally crawls under the duvet, having disappeared for a lengthy cigarette break. “I’m sorry,” she says with a shrug. “Last time you saw me it was all health and wellness. That’s all gone to shit. I’m doing anything I can to self-regulate through the break-up and I’ve picked up all these bad habits again.”

I had assumed Attwood would be more sanguine. When we previously met last year she had gushed about her marriage’s “authenticity”, but I sensed some coolness in the way she spoke about their careers, meaning they often spent long chunks apart. Yet — after a night posting furious social-media rants — she’s visibly distraught.

“I’m up and down,” she says. “It’s a weird grieving thing, a huge shift. You thought your life was going to be one thing and it’s very quickly changed.”

Attwood is at the Bridget Jones “tick-tock” age at which women are taught their fertility will evaporate. “Yeah, it’s a heavy age. I thought there’d be a stereotypical home life alongside the career, probably a child. But thank God there wasn’t. Suppose I hadn’t had the prenup, or had a baby? That would be so much worse. So everything’s played out for the best.”

The stress “has aged me about 15 years”. It doesn’t show. Fresh out of the make-up chair for the Times photoshoot, Attwood looks immaculate: tall (5ft 10in), slender, blonde, with flawless skin and cushioned lips.

She previously told me she spends about £2,000 a month on “skincare, vitamins, gym membership, all my aesthetic procedures. It’s mental but that’s the tax I pay for the life I’ve put myself into.”

“I’d probably spend that much some months on hair and make-up alone,” she says now. “That shit’s expensive. I like a good facial, a laser. I do Botox — not monthly, obviously. I like a vitamin drip, a bit of HBOT.” Sorry? “Hyperbaric oxygen. And normally I’m eating a good diet and trying to sleep, although that’s not easy at the moment.”

> “I’m up and down. It’s a weird grieving thing — a huge shift

It’s all relevant to *The Price of Perfection*, about the lengths people go to for beauty. In the third, forthcoming series, Attwood — variously — visits Turkey, where the (largely unregulated) cosmetic surgery industry is worth an estimated £3 billion a year, and investigates fat jabs and the soaring popularity of facelifts, something she previously told me she’d “probably” have by 70.

“It’ll probably be sooner,” she says now. “Facelift culture’s shifted from something associated with women in their sixties, who’d come out looking as if they’d been in a wind tunnel, to modern facelifting that’s done very conservatively, with a very skilled eye. There’s all this ‘have-they-haven’t-they?’ speculation around these

DENIM JACKET AND TROUSERS: NADINE MERABI; EARRINGS: THEDIAMONDSTORE.CO.UK

women in their early forties when they come out looking ten years younger overnight."

Attwood has no issues with such work; what gets her goat is the "highly grey ethical area" of celebrities promoting treatments. In one episode she encounters Bre Tiesi of the Netflix reality show *Selling Sunset* in a London clinic she's visiting for ExoMind, a "non-invasive brain stimulation treatment" involving placing a magnet on the brain's left side.

Tiesi's receiving the complimentary treatment (normally £2,400 for six sessions) in return for an Instagram plug. "I want you to think of positive things you would like from this treatment," the doctor says. "Millions in commission," Attwood interjects. Tiesi laughs: "Yeah, the money."

Now, Attwood chooses her words carefully. "I'm sure [ExoMind] is very safe, but it's an example of just because someone's promoting something, it doesn't mean it's for you. People should be cynical with their money. There are a lot of charlatans. I've had friends that have had surgeries for free or very cheap, who've had complications and they've been very silenced, the book has been thrown at them — 'Well, you signed this.'"

Most disturbing is a visit to Attwood's friend, the former glamour model Katie Price, who — according to Google — has had 17 breast surgeries and nine facelifts, with no plans to stop, despite her (justified) fears of looking "freaky".

"Katie's open she'll never be happy with her body. It's very sad. We spoke candidly about the strain you're putting on your body. Even if you take away the surgery, to have all those general anaesthetics in quick succession is very, very risky."

Attwood speaks from experience: her regrets include a £3,000 boob job at 20, which left her with back pain from 32E "watermelons" disproportionate to her slender frame. At 27, she had them reduced to 32DD, leaving scars for life. She also had her "grotesque" lip filler dissolved. "I've learnt not to treat your body like a wardrobe change. Social media documents changes in women's physiques as if it's as simple as changing a dress, and it's just not."

Attwood may warn about procedures, but she still uses them. She argues it's immoral to mislead women about the effort she puts in. "I take it seriously. If you spend your whole life in front of cameras it's going to be a priority. People want to look at people that look well put together.

> **Of course a genetic lottery is involved but I work out at 5am**

"People say, 'You're so lucky,' and of course a genetic lottery is involved but I work out at 5am every day. People sometimes don't want to hear it but if I sat on the sofa every night eating McDonald's, I wouldn't look like this in a bikini."

The daughter of a financial translator and former model, at her boarding school, Cranleigh, Attwood struggled with dyslexia and undiagnosed ADHD. She left at 16, became a motorsport grid girl and model, before entrancing the nation with her gobbiness on *Love Island*.

"That show gave my life direction," she says. Today, she's booked less and less for her appearance, more for her opinions, and enjoys subverting the blonde, reality stereotype. "If people underestimate you, and you are smart and articulate, when you get to surprise people it's quite joyful."

We return to Attwood's love life. The latest — meta — development is a newly "hard-launched" relationship with fellow *The Only Way Is Essex* alumnus Pete Wicks, with whom she co-hosts a Kiss FM radio show.

"It was unexpected, we went from platonic to non-platonic very quickly. He's extremely intelligent and compassionate and patient, all the things I desperately needed but didn't know I needed."

She frets things have moved too quickly. "Is something amazing happening while I'm still processing something awful? Yes. People are telling me to be single, to go on dates. But if I shut things down with Pete I'd only be dating people to find the connection I have with him."

She'd like children with "the right person. But I could also see it not being part of my story. I'm at peace with that. You can't have everything. So many parts of my life have worked out so much better than I could ever imagine."

***Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection* is on ITV2 on Tuesdays at 9pm with all episodes on ITVX**

Why I'm glad Daisy Lowe posted a photo of herself in labour

Would I put my own birth pictures online? No. But we need to see the reality of birth more often, says Claire Cohen

Tucked away in a small photo album are some Polaroids of the moment I gave birth to my son. I don't tell you this to brag (although, yes, I do have the hipster camera of choice, thanks for noticing) but because it is quite a thing to have ready access to that earth-shattering moment and be able to study it, on occasion, like some gory Renaissance painting.

Would I share it on social media? No, but then I don't live in the world of celebrity and the rules are different there. Take the model Daisy Lowe, 37, who has posted a black-and-white photograph of herself in labour with her second child.

There I was, swiping casually through her gallery of pictures — the family huddled around their new little arrival, a heavily pregnant Lowe embracing her husband, Jordan Saul — when up it popped. Oh! Head thrown back, legs akimbo, bare stomach, eyes closed, gas and air close at hand, pretty floral bra (which many women choose to wear for comfort, not just in case you happen to share the photo on Instagram, you understand).

"And then our 3 became 4," Lowe wrote in the caption. "Welcome to the world our sweet baby boy Eddie Red." Not a "trigger warning" or "NSFW" in sight.

Are famous people on a rota for this sort of thing? I ask because a year ago to the day, the DJ Calvin Harris caused an Instagram meltdown when he posted water birth photos of his wife, the Radio 1 presenter Vick Hope, and there, nestled in the carousel, was the placenta. Instagram slapped an age restriction on that one, and most of the comments were along the lines of "A disclaimer would have been nice" or "That put me off my breakfast".

If three's a trend, we are well and truly there. In October last year the actress Teresa Palmer posted an action shot of her daughter, Lotus Bloom, emerging via a water birth. The comedian Amy Schumer shared a photograph of herself on the operating table post-caesarian section. The actress Hilary Duff published a video (in black and white, of course) of her sitting naked in a pool holding her newborn daughter. "I've been wondering for a long time if I would ever share this video as it is extremely personal," she wrote.

From top: Daisy Lowe with her husband, Jordan Saul; the picture she posted of herself in labour with her second child

All of which leads me to say, thank you. Really. Having had my son a year and a half ago, I know how much we need to see this stuff — especially given that studies have found that 78 per cent of women feel unprepared for their birth.

A kind friend had shown me a photograph from her C-section, which gave me some idea of what might happen below my belt (searching Google Images beforehand felt like a dangerous game). But my placenta was the first I'd seen — unless you count the cutesy knitted one passed around my National Childbirth Trust class, which bore zero resemblance to the wobbly, bloody organ I encountered — and I wasn't prepared. Actually I was really shocked, and that can't be right.

Yes, you can know too much. Yes, celebrity birth pictures have probably had an entire team behind them deciding on the best angle. But parents-to-be need to feel ready for what's coming, and the depictions of birth in popular culture tend not to come close. A woman lying on her back, a few pushes, a single bead of sweat trickling down her face before a strangely clean baby is put in her arms as she smiles and laughs? Think again. Or how about a royal woman, standing on the hospital steps shortly after giving birth, immaculate dress, hair and make-up? See what I mean?

Where celebrities tread, we follow. There are now Instagram accounts, such as the Positive Birth Company (a hypnobirthing course), dedicated to sharing pictures and clips of actual women giving birth — blood, vernix, fluids. Women crying, screaming, on the floor. A baby being pulled through a C-section incision that gave me a sense of what I hadn't seen behind the screen separating me from my internal organs. It made me want to understand more, not less.

Given that a baby is born in the UK every 54 seconds, that's a lot of photos we're not seeing of the most jaw-dropping thing the human body can do. That doesn't need a trigger warning or pearl clutching — just don't ask me to open my photo album quite yet.

Ask Professor Tanya Byron

My father regrets leaving my mother. Can I intervene?

Q **Ten years ago, when he was 64, my father left our mother after nearly 40 years of marriage for his secretary, who is almost 20 years younger than him. It was the cliché our family never imagined we'd live through. It devastated Mum and nearly destroyed us as a family.**

To everyone's surprise, Mum rebuilt her life. She stayed in the family home and never spoke badly about Dad. Over the years, Dad has increasingly found reasons to visit: to fix something or collect post, but inevitably stays for tea. When my wife, children or my brother's family are there, the atmosphere is extraordinary. Mum and Dad laugh, reminisce, even cook together and are wonderful grandparents. Watching them, you'd assume they had never separated.

The problem is that Dad now tells me and my brother that leaving Mum was the biggest mistake of his life. He misses the life they built together and realises too late what he threw away. Yet he remains with his second wife, even though he's deeply unhappy.

His wife desperately wants to move abroad, despite Dad now being in his seventies. He says he doesn't want to but feels under pressure and worries he'll give in to keep the peace. She becomes angry if she knows he's been in contact with Mum (we suspect one of the reasons for the pressure to move abroad is to stop this), so much of his life now revolves around concealment.

I don't know whether Mum would ever take him back. She might, but not while he's married. My brother thinks we should stay out of it. I think we're watching someone we love drift into making a second mistake because he can't face making one decision. Is there anything we can do to help him?
Nathaniel

A Your father is psychologically suspended between two lives: grieving for the family he left while remaining unable to commit wholeheartedly to the life he chose instead. He is distressed and conflicted, but this decision to leave or stay with his second wife is his alone.

Psychological research highlights that we are surprisingly poor at abandoning decisions into which we have invested heavily. Behavioural economists call this the sunk-cost fallacy: the tendency to persist because we have invested so much (time, money, energy), even when continuing no longer benefits us.

When we experience cognitive dissonance — the discomfort of holding two conflicting beliefs, feelings or desires at the same time — resolution is not always immediate because we are remarkably adept at living with contradiction. Your father appears to have one foot in his past and one in his present. He seeks comfort and familiarity with your mother and the family life he misses while continuing to live in a marriage that, by your account, no longer reflects the future he wants. Ambivalence, although painful, can often feel safer than making a choice that will inevitably hurt others.

Compounding these psychological states, and probably the most powerful aspect of this situation, could be shame. To leave a second marriage would not just mean ending another relationship but would require your father to confront the possibility that the decision that caused such pain all those years ago was "the biggest mistake of his life". This is an extraordinarily difficult admission to make, not just to others but to oneself.

Your instinct to rescue him is understandable. As his child, you have a natural instinct to protect him. Proceed with caution because it is important to distinguish support from rescue. You cannot make your father's decision for him, however obvious it may seem from the outside.

When you describe the family together and say "the atmosphere is extraordinary", I can feel your joy. It also suggests that you are more than a neutral observer and are invested in the outcome. Understandably, you may hope your father chooses to stay, not only for yourself but to protect your children, who are enjoying having both grandparents together in their lives.

What you can do is provide a calm, non-judgmental space in which he can think. Resist expressing your opinion and instead encourage him to reflect on the life he wants to be living five or ten years from now, and whether his choices are moving him towards it or postponing an inevitable reckoning. Sometimes people remain trapped because they believe that avoiding a decision is a neutral act. It isn't. Choosing not to decide is a decision.

There is another person whose agency matters here: your mother. It is lovely that your parents continue to enjoy one another's company as grandparents, but nostalgia is not the same as reconciliation. Your mother has spent a decade rebuilding her life. Whether she'd welcome your father back is something only she can know, and she should never find herself cast in the role of waiting for him.

As for the prospect of moving abroad, if your father does not want that future, it is not a compromise he should make to keep a relationship intact. From what you describe, his wife's insistence that he choose, coupled with pressure to relocate despite his uncertainty, risks becoming coercive. The healthiest decisions are made freely, not under the weight of fear, guilt or ultimatums.

I also wonder whether all this reflects a longer-standing pattern rather than the specifics of either relationship. Perhaps your father struggles to tolerate the inevitable disappointments of long-term relationships and instead of staying with that discomfort, becomes drawn to the imagined fulfilment of an alternative, as he may have done when he left your mother.

Psychologists call this experiential avoidance — escaping emotional discomfort by changing circumstances — combined with affective forecasting, our tendency to overestimate how much happier a different future will make us. Your father may be repeating the same pattern in reverse: having once idealised life beyond his family, he may now be idealising the family he left. The common thread may not be either relationship but the belief that fulfilment lies somewhere else.

If your father does decide to leave his marriage, it should not be because he wants to return to your mother but because he has concluded that his present relationship has run its course, regardless of what happens next. Psychologically, these are two separate decisions. When they become fused there is a risk that one relationship becomes an escape from the other rather than a choice made on its own merits.

Families often wish they could solve one another's dilemmas. We cannot but we can support our loved one to find the confidence that they are capable of doing so. Your father may need help finding the clarity and courage to decide, perhaps through friends or a therapist who can work with him to disentangle regret from responsibility. What he doesn't need is for his sons to carry the weight of a choice that has always been his.

Whatever he decides, there is one thing he cannot recover: time. The question he has to ask himself is not which decision will cause the least pain but which pain he is prepared to live with.

If you would like Professor Tanya Byron's help, email proftanyabyron@thetimes.co.uk

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A sibling's death hits hard. My brother's was a blow to the heart

When his younger brother suffered a cardiac arrest, Stephen Smith found himself at a loss with his grief

Stephen Smith and Michael in Liverpool in 1974. Left: in 2022

When my younger brother Michael went into hospital with breathing difficulties this summer, we put it down to a mild lung infection exacerbated by the heat. He was 63, a fitness coach and had hardly had a day's sickness in his life. Yet within minutes of being admitted he went into cardiac arrest, a "catastrophic insult" to his heart, in medical jargon.

The registrar in Resuscitation summoned every available medic. Twenty people strove to save Michael's life for 45 minutes — a long time in "Resus" — because of his relative youth, but he never recovered. His death is as yet unexplained, a matter for the coroner, whose in-tray is bulging after a spike in morbidity linked to our seasonal heatwaves.

As a reporter at the BBC's *Newsnight*, I once interviewed a birdlike Joan Didion at her New York apartment. The writer had just published *The Year of Magical Thinking* about the loss of her husband, John Gregory Dunne, who died of a heart attack in front of her. "Life changes in the instant," she wrote. "You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends."

Mike leaves a son of 21. The hardest blow falls on him. His family, which seems much smaller all of a sudden, also includes Mike's ex-partner and his siblings, my sister Tor and me. Together with Mike we went through the loss of our parents decades ago. Dad has been dead for nearly 30 years, Mum for 20. They'd both been ill and there was relief that their suffering was done. As painful as it is, the loss of your parents is one of life's unswervable milestones. But the sudden death of a brother — or sister — is another kind of insult to the heart. I used to think that the loss of Mum and Dad put the three of us in the firing line, moved us up to the trench nearest the front. Now we've taken a grievous blow.

Although there's comprehensive data for child and parent bereavement, compiled by the Childhood Bereavement Network, there's nothing similar for siblings. Estimates suggest that, at any one time, as many as six million people in the UK will have suffered the loss of a brother or sister. Julia Samuel, the bestselling author of *Grief Works*, describes them as "the forgotten mourners". Understandably, in the hierarchy of grief, siblings tend to be outranked by the loved one's partner, children and even elderly parents. Yet, bereavement counsellors say, the death of one of the keepers of your intimate shared history hits hard.

Of course, it's also a reminder of our own mortality. I'm the eldest, older than Mike by 18 months, and I grew up assuming that I wouldn't have to face up to the loss of my brother or sister because I wouldn't be around. Mike was the fitness expert, after all. My brother remembered our childhood adventures and was a perfect mimic of our older relatives. He didn't lead the kind of life that gets you into the obit pages but he had main character energy. He was a man of a rare and unaffected charm. It wasn't the polish of a smoothie-chops, more like a guileless openness that people found winning.

> **Mike had main character energy. He was a man of rare charm**

He was without front or stratagem — or game, as they say now. There was no angle or side to him.

When he was a boy a new craze seemed to seize him every five minutes: fishing, model aircraft, a rabbit, air rifles, walkie-talkies... He was my constant companion when we were little.

We squirted each other with Fairy Liquid bottles filled with water. We talked Tor, the youngest, into test-driving our less than roadworthy go-kart and pushed it down a hill, deaf to her screams. Once, while playing football together, we clashed heads while trying to head the ball. I broke my nose and killed the nerve in a tooth. My lips blew up like Mick Jagger's. Mike wasn't even scratched.

I used to think my brother was a jammy so-and-so. He was brilliant at talking himself out of doing the washing-up. A highlight of Christmas Day was Mike cheating at Jenga, tapping the wooden bricks with the end of a fork.

He turned this into a bravura performance, as if he was Howard Carter probing for the entrance to Tutankhamun's tomb. When he was older he dyed his hair blond and tore round the country on a motorbike.

At first glance it might seem as though Mike took more from our sibling support system than he put in. He suffered from anxiety and was eventually diagnosed with Asperger's: he wasn't jammy, really.

But he always wanted to know how Tor and I were, what we were up to, and he shared in our moments of success without jealousy.

As a personal trainer he had a stable of devoted regulars whom he saw over a number of decades. He didn't like to put his rates up in case it scared them off. I suspected that they stayed with him because they didn't have the heart to cancel; after all, he didn't cost a fortune. But that was to underestimate them — and him. Mike was good at what he did; his clients had the abs to prove it. Occasionally he showed me pictures of these oldsters in their vests and joggers. So-and-so was 94 and yet could bench so much — and Mike would name a preposterous weight.

> **He was 63, a fitness coach and had hardly had a day's sickness in his life**

When he called on them for a session first thing, more often than not they or their wives would offer Mike breakfast. He seldom declined. In this way he might consume two or three breakfasts in a morning. He once arrived as a client was about to sit down to dinner. Without demur the man's wife slid the meal in front of my brother instead and he cleared the plate as the man worked out in front of him. In the end his clients outlived him, which I think it is to his credit — he put them in the lifeboats but he went down with the ship. They say they miss him very much.

As for the intimations of mortality that the death of a sibling provokes in the survivors, "intimations" scarcely does them justice. They don't present like a discreet cough and a murmur but a loud knocking. My brother heard it a long time back. He had a morbid fear of death — and of hospitals. He sought out Chinese herbs and other exotic dietary supplements said to boost health and longevity and would talk about them given the least encouragement. But he never learnt to cook for himself and lived on a diet of ready-made meals. He was a paradox: a fitness enthusiast who dosed himself with nutrients and chased them down with a takeaway curry.

There's something else too. Both my sister and I have heart issues: an irregular heartbeat. We didn't know Mike had an issue as well, until he suffered his cardiac arrest. His post-mortem examination, when the results are known, could have serious ramifications for the pair of us. Mike's death is a punch in the ticker in more ways than one.

By the time I got to resus at the hospital, he'd been dead for an hour or so. Before I'd even spoken to a doctor a flustered orderly asked me if I wanted to see my brother. Of course I did. The medic pulled back blue drapes and there he was. Poking out from under a blanket were the toes of his familiar, well-worn trainers, a range of sports shoes designed to resemble human feet. I stroked his brow and held his hand and said, "I'm so sorry, Mike." Sorry he had gone in such a shocking and sudden way, sorry for the years he wouldn't have, and for the time he might have spent with his boy and the rest of us.

Perhaps there are consolations. Better a swift exit for Mike than a life in and out of hospital, an invalid's lot. He won't get any older as we age; that's if we're lucky, of course. In my memory my brother will always be encouraging his clients between helping himself to their breakfasts, and the star of the show at Christmas, with the Jenga wobbling in front of him and Michael doing his impersonation of a nerveless safe-cracker.

edinburgh first night

classical

All Rise

Usher Hall, Edinburgh
★★★★☆

The trendy mantra of "diversity, equality and inclusion" is under pretty savage scrutiny right now. So it was refreshing and bold of the Edinburgh International Festival to open its 2026 programme with a modern choral and orchestral epic demonstrating that, in music at least, a fervent belief in DEI can produce exciting results.

The work, *All Rise*, was composed by the American trumpeter and bandleader Wynton Marsalis 27 years ago. Back then it struck me as a wonderfully ambitious melting-pot of about 20 different musical styles — from Mahler and neo-classical Stravinsky to New Orleans funeral bands, ragtime, spirituals, sambas and salsas — but rather unfocused and overextended, with its 12 movements running to more than two hours. This time, with 200 performers crammed onto the stage under the admirably organised conductor James Gaffigan, I was simply swept along by its brilliant moment-by-moment musical inspirations and overriding optimism.

Only about a third of the work involves the singers — though what a spine-shuddering impact the massed lungs of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and Jason Max Ferdinand Singers made. In most of the movements, the fascination lies in the interaction between the 15 virtuosos of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (which Marsalis has led for 40 years) and the classical instrumentalists of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

The jazzers certainly supplied some incredible solos, Marsalis himself sending his trumpet spiralling through the stratosphere. But the RSNO players also seized their chances to shine, so that jazz and classical styles didn't so much fuse as magically echo and find inspiration in each other.

The work seems to be mostly about humanity's tribes learning from each other rather than warring. In a festival that will, according to its director Nicola Benedetti, explore "freedom, ingenuity, prejudice and hypocrisy" in the past 250 years of American history, it was good to start with a piece with joy and idealism at its heart.

Richard Morrison

CAIO LÍRI

Wagner Moura and Julia Bernat

A real courtroom drama

The Brazilian star Wagner Moura shines in this rewrite of Ibsen, says Clive Davis

theatre

A Trial — After An Enemy of the People

Lyceum, Edinburgh
(150min)
★★★☆☆

It didn't come as a huge surprise to see a reference to *Jaws* in *A Trial*, this update of *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen's drama about a doctor at odds with his own community. After all, Steven Spielberg's film recycles the same moral conflict in its depiction of a police chief trying to win over a mayor who doesn't want a shark scaring away holidaymakers. Still, I didn't expect to hear talk of *Erin Brockovich* and *Rocky* thrown into the mix.

A Trial's director, Christiane Jatahy, and her co-writers Lucas Paraizo and the actor Wagner Moura — star of the award-winning Brazilian screen thriller *The Secret Agent* — explore a courtroom format, set in the north of the country, in which Moura's version of Thomas Stockmann breaks the fourth wall to chat to us. His destiny is placed in the hands of a jury picked from members of the audience who agreed to be put up for selection before the play began.

It's an ingenious concept, even though this collaboration with Festival d'Avignon and Amsterdam's Holland Festival doesn't solve an obvious problem: the drama stacks the odds so firmly in Stockmann's favour that it's hard to imagine anyone finding him guilty. (Surprisingly, three jurists did just that at the end of this Edinburgh International Festival performance.)

Jatahy conjures up a spirit of spontaneity. Louise Burke is cast as a hesitant moderator who, as if plucked from the streets at the last moment, wanders the stage with a clipboard in her hand and gets tangled up in procedural details with both Stockmann and his brother Peter (Danilo Grangheia), the small-town mayor who is presenting the case for the prosecution. Stockmann's daughter Petra (Julia Bernat) leads his defence. A video of a family gathering becomes a central piece of evidence, while an expert on pollution adds her testimony via a screen.

Some of the script's allusions to fake news are fairly obvious. As she demonstrated three years ago in *Dusk*, her version of Lars von Trier's film *Dogville*, Jatahy seldom misses a chance to dish out a political lecture. The good news is that Moura cuts a compelling figure who, for all his surface charm, can't quite suppress his testiness and impatience with the townspeople. He knows he is right.

Ends tonight

comedy

Ahir Shah: Golden

Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh
★★☆☆☆

In the three years since he won the Edinburgh Comedy Award, Ahir Shah has had both the biggest causes for cheer in his life — marriage, a London flat — and the biggest causes for alarm — illness, the mortgage on that London flat. Mix in a family death, depression, a body at war with itself and an unofficial autism diagnosis, and you've a fair chunk of difficulty from which to find the fun.

I would have backed this 35-year-old to pull it off — his prizewinning show, *Ends*, was personal and political, hilarious and tear-jerking. But *Golden* is uncomfortable with itself. Shah identifies the issues without quite alchemising them into humour. Maybe, to him, they still aren't funny.

Sometimes, as when he spells out his white Irish wife's immigrant status, or explains financial prudence, it feels as if this formerly motormouthed stand-up is edging towards a new faux-naive way to land a laugh. Some lines are beautifully crafted, but the steadiness of it feels tentative rather than mature.

The mortgage is both a triumph and such a test because it brings back memories of growing up in Wembley amid a palpable sense of financial worry. He pays tribute to his hard-working Hindu parents in a way that is sometimes touching, sometimes mawkish. Some of the funniest stuff is about his happiest subject: his marriage. Shah sees himself as British Asian, she sees him as English, they both think they "married the oppressor". He's amusing about his "normal" background, suggesting that most Fringe comics are the communist children of millionaires. That feels like the old Shah: genial but sharp-toothed, endearingly uptight.

He mentions the chronic idiopathic urticaria that has made his body allergic to his life, but that and his depression feel only anecdotal. So the laughs don't land and a recently added ending, in honour of his late grandmother, is muddled. That will surely improve as the Fringe goes on, but for now this brilliant comedian is handling his tale about accepting adulthood — with all its virtues and limitations — with kid gloves.

Dominic Maxwell

To Aug 30

theatre

Roleplay

Summerhall, Edinburgh
(70min)
★★★☆☆

This is the kind of piece that normally has overheated red top editors reaching for "sexy shocker opens in Edinburgh" headlines. But if truth be told *Roleplay*, Hannah Reilly's much-anticipated Fringe solo drama about a feminist podcaster who decides that being down and dirty is the way to become a media phenomenon, turns out to be a strangely predictable affair.

Word of mouth has ensured that the adults-only run is already sold out at Summerhall. (The show comes from Francesca Moody Productions, the company that gave us *Fleabag* and *Baby Reindeer*.) And Reilly — who gets her top off and begins gyrating in the opening minutes — possesses lots and lots of energy. But it's a venture that's much too eager to be transgressive and in-your-face.

"I've never understood why people think it's desperate to want attention." Reilly presents us with a character who, after years of turning out worthy content, makes a calculated decision to turn herself into a vamp who puts bedroom talk front and centre of her public image, much to the dismay of her mother, a successful journalist.

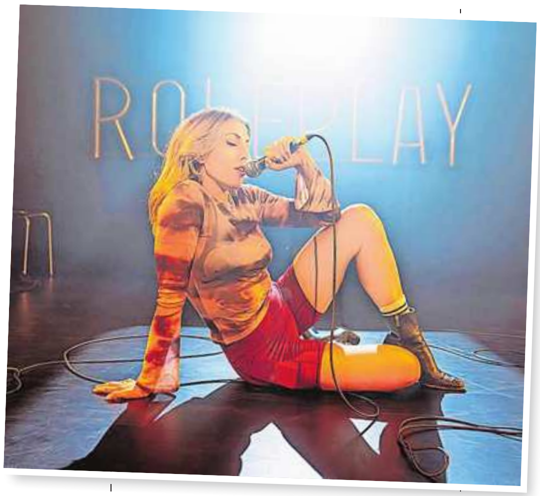
Ratings shoot up when our narrator calls herself a slut and starts asking questions such as whether choking is attempted murder or just foreplay. An all-powerful media entrepreneur throws bundles of money at her. Cocaine gives her a rush, and her posh, drawling boyfriend comes along for the ride.

In the end, though — surprise, surprise — our heroine discovers that non-stop hedonism may not necessarily be the path to inner happiness. As a lesson in applied feminism, it's less than revelatory. I suppose it didn't help that I had started my day watching another play about a podcaster who happened to have a mother who was an acclaimed journalist. Small world, isn't it?

Paige Rattray's direction certainly pumps up the juices: the lighting throbs away, and there's dextrous use of sound effects. Reilly possesses undeniable confidence and poise. All she really needs is a script that does her justice.

Clive Davis

To Aug 31, then at Soho Theatre, London, Oct 22 to Nov 21



A poised Hannah Reilly in her Fringe show about a feminist podcaster

Meet Britney: the new French and Saunders

Charly Clive and Ellen Robertson formed a double act when Clive was diagnosed with a brain tumour. 'It made sense,' they tell Blanca Schofield

REBECCA NEED-MENEAR

Charly Clive and Ellen Robertson

If you happened to be at the Lyric Hammersmith theatre in west London in early July, you may have noticed a famous face in the stalls. Steve Carell, the Hollywood star, went to see the 33-year-old British actress Charly Clive in *Relics*, a family inheritance drama also starring Sally Phillips. "He came for Wimbledon and stayed on two extra days to see [*Relics*]," Clive says. "He made no fanfare, he didn't tell anyone... He stuck around after. We had a drink. He was lovely to my parents."

Carell and Clive know each other because they play father and daughter in *Rooster*, a well-reviewed soft-hearted campus comedy on HBO Max that has just been renewed for a second series. This month she is returning to the Edinburgh Fringe — the place where her career started ten years ago — for a sketch show and *Jitters*, a two-hander about a stepmother and stepdaughter who are the same age, written by Clive's best friend since childhood, Ellen Robertson. You might recognise Robertson, also 33, from *Vladimir*, in which she played Rachel Weisz's daughter, and from Lena Dunham's hit Netflix show *Too Much*.

"*Jitters* came out of a sketch idea where we were, like, the funniest relationship we could have on stage is if Charly played my stepmum," Robertson says. "I was getting deeper and deeper into it and it was becoming less of a sketch and more of a 15-page play." She was also interested in "how reliant our generation is on their parents financially... What it means to be dependent when we're assumed to be forming full adult lives." Robertson doesn't shy away from the fact she had financial help from her parents to buy her flat in London with her girlfriend, the Irish comedian Catherine Bohart, last year. "We imagined when we were younger, in our teens, that we'd be able to afford housing before we were nearly 40. And I think it's doing a really interesting thing to women and the potential of family-making."

The other theme in *Jitters* is age-gap relationships — the stepmother is getting married to the daughter's much older father. "I feel like we've seen quite a lot about [this] from the perspective of the older man," Robertson says. "Or often written with hindsight from the perspective of a slightly wiser older woman, so I wanted to write something from a present perspective." Clive, who is playing the stepmother, has experience of dating an older man — when she was 26 and he was 38. "I thought at 26, going out with a much older man meant I was bypassing immaturity," she says. "How wrong I was. It was, if anything, a lesson that some men just stay infant — and maybe there's a reason that a man nearly 40 has decided to date a woman in her mid-twenties."

Holy Mackerel!, the sketch show they're doing as their double act, Britney, "is an ode to friendship and community and just having fun with your mates", Robertson says. Both women grew up watching Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins, *Smack the Pony* and other excellent female sketch groups. They find now that people can be a bit taken aback when they appear on mixed-bill comedy nights. "Sometimes that's great because the audience is like, 'Oh, something different!' And sometimes it's terrible because the audience is like, 'Why aren't you doing stand-up comedy, which we like? We don't like these weird little plays,'" Robertson adds.

Clive with Steve Carell in Rooster

Sketch shows are back in fashion thanks to *Saturday Night Live UK*. Were they worried (as was the case among many media sceptics) that it wouldn't work? "Only because I thought, how involved is America going to be with it? If it's going to be good it's got to be British," Clive says, sipping a dirty vodka martini at Joe Allen, a West End spot favoured by luvvies. She would audition if the opportunity came around. But "I think I'll probably be too old. They'll want new, young people."

Clive and Robertson decided together at 13 they wanted to be actors. They grew up in a village near Reading and became best friends after a history school trip. "We would ring each other after school and waste our parents' money on the landline," Robertson says over a video call. When Clive was diagnosed with a brain tumour at 23 after noticing she had no peripheral vision, Robertson moved into her family home to help her through the treatment. "Sweet baby Ellen," Clive calls her when she talks about this.

To help Clive out of "this dark place", Robertson "conspired" with Clive's father to get her on the stage. They encouraged her to go to the Fringe in 2016 with a sketch show she and Robertson had written together during her convalescence. It was called *Britney*, and was about her brain tumour, which Clive named after the pop star. "For a lot of people that seems bonkers but for us it made total sense," Clive says. It received great reviews and their careers took off.

In 2018 the tumour came back and she had to have radiotherapy. She found out at the same time that she had got the lead role in the Channel 4 series *Pure*, about a woman with a form of severe obsessive compulsive disorder that leads to intrusive sexual thoughts. "I remember being like, I don't care what happens to me. I'm going to be an actor. The universe has told me."

She delayed starting her treatment, a decision her doctor called "not responsible", so she could film *Pure*. "I was so f***ing sensible for such a long time after being ill because you have to be and everyone tells you you must be. Your life is dictated by sensible. I thought, I'm not going to be sensible for 11 weeks. I'm going to live my dream."

Clive's tumour has influenced her career in another, unexpected manner. Radiotherapy "ages your vocal cords. So my voice got deep and raspy. Now I've done ten audiobooks because people think my voice is sexy."

Her health is fine now and she takes advantage of opportunities wherever she can. "I think I have more fun than most people do because I know that having months of your life taken away from you while you have a body that's capable of lots of fun means that: sleep when you're dead! You're not too tired to go to the party. You're not. Go. Have fun. Kiss your friends. Tell them you love them." With that, she is off to have a steak dinner on her own in a posh restaurant in the West End. "Life's too short not to."

Charly Clive and Ellen Robertson star in *Jitters* at Summerhall, Edinburgh, and *Holy Mackerel!* at Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh, both to Aug 21

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai easy

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

9			8			5		1				2	6					3	1	
4	7		2	5											9		3	6	7	
	8	5		1	9									1	2			5		4
		8	1	9		7	5					6				3	9		4	
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Sudoku super fiendish

	6			9		4		
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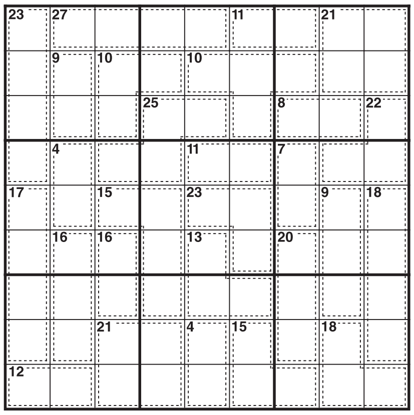
				4			6	
	9	6				2	8	
	7			5				
6					3	8		
	1	8	5					
		7		6			9	

Killer deadly

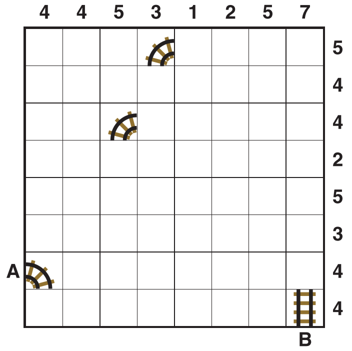
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



23	27				11		21	
	9	10		10				
			25			8		22
	4			11		7		
17		15		23			9	18
	16	16		13		20		
		21		4	15		18	
12								

Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

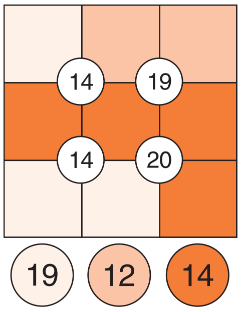


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

	<			1				
∨								
		∨				∧		∨
	<					3	<	
					>			
								1

Sakuro



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

■	3	8	18	16	18	10	26	■	22	19	3	12
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3	■	8	■	11	■	8	■	■	■	16	■	3
7	1	2	18	■	1	18	6	3	16 N	20	3	■

A B C D E ~~F~~ G H I J K L M ~~N~~ O P Q R S T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 N	17	18	19	20	21	22 U	23	24 F	25	26

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

4	6				
		2	6		
	1			6	
6				2	
			3		1
		1			6

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

Thursday's solutions

SAMURAI

8	6	9	7	2	5	3	4	1				3	5	7	1	4	2	8	9	6
3	2	1	6	9	4	5	7	8				6	8	2	9	7	3	5	1	4
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1	7	3	9	4	6	8	5	2				8	4	3	7	1	6	9	2	5
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7	1	9	6	3	4	8	5	2	9	3	4	6	7	1	8	9	4	5	3	2
5	8	3	7	4	9	1	2	6				5	3	6	1	2	8	4	7	9
6	4	1	2	5	8	9	3	7				4	9	8	7	5	3	2	1	6
2	9	7	3	6	1	5	4	8				7	1	2	6	4	9	8	5	3
8	5	6	1	2	3	7	9	4				8	4	5	9	3	7	6	2	1
9	7	2	4	8	5	6	1	3				1	6	7	2	8	5	3	9	4
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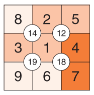
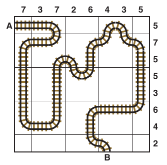
SAKURO



MINI SUDOKU

4	2	6	1	5	3
5	3	1	6	2	4
6	1	5	4	3	2
3	4	2	5	1	6
1	6	3	2	4	5
2	5	4	3	6	1

TRAIN TRACKS



FUTOSHIKI

4		1		2		5		3
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				∨		∨		
2		4		3		1		5
5		3		1		4		2
		∨				∨		
1	<	2		5		3		4

SUDOKU

6	3	1	8	4	5	2	7	9
5	9	2	7	1	6	3	8	4
7	4	8	2	3	9	6	5	1
2	6	7	9	5	1	8	4	3
1	8	9	4	7	3	5	6	2
4	5	3	6	2	8	9	1	7
8	1	6	3	9	4	7	2	5
9	2	4	5	8	7	1	3	6
3	7	5	1	6	2	4	9	8

KILLER

8	1	2	3	9	4	7	6	5
6	7	5	1	2	8	4	3	9
4	9	3	5	7	6	8	1	2
1	6	9	7	8	3	2	5	4
5	2	7	4	1	9	6	8	3
3	8	4	2	6	5	1	9	7
2	5	6	8	3	7	9	4	1
7	4	8	9	5	1	3	2	6
9	3	1	6	4	2	5	7	8

CODEWORD

■	O	V	E	R	R	U	N	■	O	P	U	S
S	■	O	■	■	■	P	■	L	■	R	■	T
M	I	D	W	E	E	K	■	I	V	O	R	Y
U	■	K	■	X	■	E	■	Q	■	J	■	E
D	R	A	M	A	■	E	X	U	D	E	D	■
G	■	■	■	C	■	P	■	I	■	C	■	T
E	C	H	O	E	D	■	E	D	I	T	O	R
D	■	A	■	R	■	P	■	A	■	■	■	A
■	S	N	O	B	B	Y	■	T	O	P	I	C
Q	■	D	■	A	■	T	■	O	■	I	■	I
U	N	F	I	T	■	H	O	R	I	Z	O	N
A	■	U	■	E	■	O	■	■	■	Z	■	G
D	U	L	L	■	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	■

Grylls takes on the desert with... Judas Iscariot

Carol Midgley

TV review

The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls
Prime Video
★★★☆☆

It is difficult to hear Bear Grylls's name these days without mentally conjuring up that image of him standing waist-deep in the River Thames hugging Russell Brand during the latter's baptism. I wish it wasn't so but once seen, never forgotten.

Grylls has defended his decision to take part that day despite Brand being accused of historical sexual assaults (which he denies), saying that he tries not to judge others and to live by the principle: "What would Jesus do?"

Well now he has the chance to find out because in his new series he gets to go on an adventure with Jesus. OK, I should clarify that it's not actually the son of God himself but Jonathan Roumie, the actor who plays him in *The Chosen*, a stonkingly popular American historical drama series based on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is the most successful crowdfunded TV series of all time and has been seen by an estimated 280 million people worldwide (it's on Prime Video in the UK).

In each episode of the unsnappily titled *The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls*, he takes one member of the cast on an expedition in the wilds of Utah, though Jesus has to wait until episode five for his turn.

Grylls, who says his faith in Christ has been his "guiding light" throughout his life, kicks off in episode one with Judas Iscariot, or rather Luke Dimyan who plays him. They are dropped into the Moab desert and before long Grylls is making Dimyan urinate into a pouch to warm up his dinner, which wouldn't exactly whet the appetite.

"That stinks," Grylls says as Dimyan hands over a bag of pee that helps to heat their military MRE (meal ready to eat) food. A trifle harsh! The desert can be very dehydrating. What would Jesus have said?

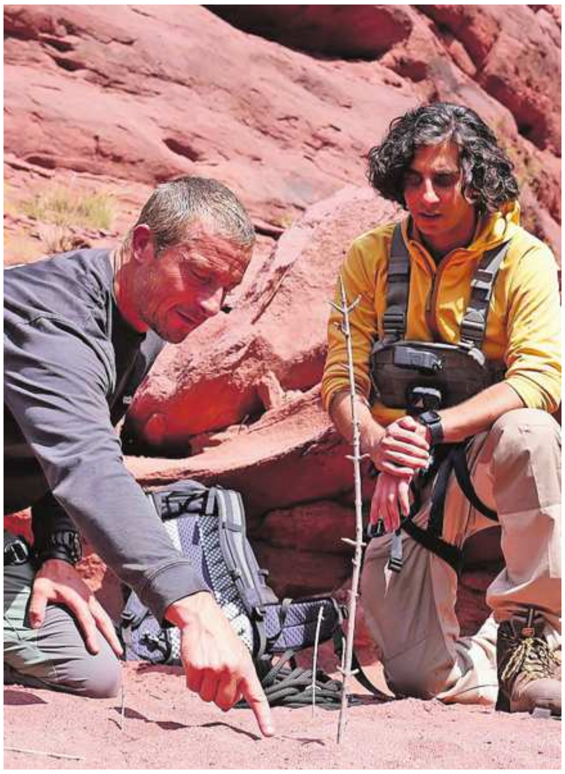
I have had my beefs with some of Grylls's programmes in the past, mostly because I don't agree with killing animals for TV shows. But this series is really rather good, more gently paced, thoughtful and set amid truly spectacular scenery. The first episode is helped by the charisma and wit of Dimyan, who is Coptic Egyptian, a native Christian ethnoreligious group of Egypt, and whose grandfather was a priest.

He says Judas was the character he wanted to play the most, even though it means strangers come up to him and say, "We don't like you" (got to love viewers who can't distinguish between reality and the telly). Judas, he says, is a complex individual who did love Jesus and is interesting to play because his story is a "poetic tragedy". He was "doomed to fail" because he "wasn't able to accept what was out of his control".

Grylls then has Dimyan sucking moisture out of a sweaty sock. They find some damp sand in the shadow of a rock and a survival method is to fill a sock with the sand and suck the moisture through it. I'm pleased to say they each used their own socks.

Amid the parachuting and the zip-wiring through canyons they talk about life, faith, improv and failure. "Most people are terrified of failure," says Grylls, but they shouldn't be because "failure is a stepping stone". It's a good formula which makes for considered, non-shouty TV.

AMAZON MGM STUDIOS



Bear Grylls and Luke Dimyan in the Moab desert in Utah

Radio choice

Human Intelligence
Radio 4, 1.45pm

The novelist Naomi Alderman returns with a new series of the programme that examines the minds of history's greatest thinkers and discovers where their creativity came from and how they applied it to work that still influences us today. She begins with Emily Brontë, *above*, and asks if her reclusive nature contributed to the intensity of her writing. The *Behind the Glass: A Parsonage Podcast* from the Brontë Museum in Haworth takes a look at items in its collection, plus social issues that would have affected the family, including the railway's development and the importance of food in gothic fiction.
Clair Woodward

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Rosie Wright and Stig Abell with Breakfast **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Carolyn Quinn with Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Edith Bowman's Shiny Happy Playlist **7.30** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Blues Show with Cerys Matthews **10.00** The Good Groove with Melvin Odoom **12.00** OJ Borg **2.30am** One Hit Wonders with OJ Borg **3.00** Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Another chance to hear a Prom in which cellist Maximilian Hornung is the soloist in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto. Also there are concerts from the Verbier Music Festival. Verbier Festival — Debussy (*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*); Granada Festival of Early Music — Crécquillon (*Missa — Mort m'a privé — Kyrie, Gloria & Credo*); Verbier Festival — Chopin (Fantasy in F minor, Op 49); Bruckner (Symphony No 4 in E flat — *Romantic*); and BBC Proms — Shostakovich (Cello Concerto No 1 in E flat)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult (1764-1836)
Donald Macleod explores the work of Hélène de Montgeroult (r)
5.00 In Tune
From the Hub in Edinburgh
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026
London's Royal Academy of Music and New York's Juilliard School orchestras conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen in Stravinsky, Berg and Bartók. Presented by Ian Skelly, live from the Royal Albert Hall. Stravinsky (*Symphony in Three Movements*); Berg (Violin Concerto); and Bartók (Concerto for Orchestra)
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary
5.04 Last Word (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Across the Red Line
Exploring the value of university education. Last in the series
9.30 How Did We Get Here?
No World Order
How cooperation between the USA and Russia broke down (3/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Nuala McGovern presents
11.00 Behind the Crime
A woman from Texas whose life is upended after stealing an air conditioner (2/3)
11.45 Book of the Week:
Hiroshima, 8.15: The Lost Memoir
Kiyoshi Tanimoto's account of the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1/5)
12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Choice Human Intelligence
A focus on Emily Brontë (11/15)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Alone
By Moray Hunter (5/6) (r)
2.45 Opening Lines
Part one of two. Examining Don DeLillo's 1988 novel *Libra* (r)
3.00 Great Lives
Derek Jacobi and Tim Walker reflect on Laurence Olivier (1/9)
3.30 You're Dead to Me
The reign of Roman emperor Constantine the Great (7/13) (r)
4.00 Burnham's Pledge
A reports on Andy Burnham's pledge to tackle rough sleeping (r)
4.30 The Kitchen Cabinet
Last in the series (r)
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Just a Minute
With Tony Hawks, Desiree Burch, Cariad Lloyd and Julian Clary (4/6)
7.00 The Archers
Heartbreak is in store for Lynda
7.15 Front Row
Arts programme
8.00 The Briefing Room
Discussing a story in the news (r)
8.30 BBC Inside Science
The latest scientific research (r)
9.00 Across the Red Line (3/3) (r)
9.30 How Did We Get Here?
No World Order (3/6) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime:
The Vicar of Wakefield
By Oliver Goldsmith (6/10)
11.00 Intimacy
Liza's personal life spills onto set, creating tension (3/4)
11.30 A Good Read (1/9) (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week:
Hiroshima, 8.15:
The Lost Memoir (1/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **8.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Just a Minute **9.30** Following the Martian Invasion **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Sounds Natural **10.30** Billy Bunter's Birthday Bash **11.00** The Waiting Game **11.30** The Senior Partner **12.00** Control Group Six **12.30pm** Dad's Army **1.00** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **1.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **1.45** Small Island **2.00** Wordaholics **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story **3.00** Renaissance Man: The Last Judgment of Giorgio Vasari **4.00** Sounds Natural **4.30** Billy Bunter's Birthday Bash **5.00** The Waiting Game **5.30** The Senior Partner **6.00** Control Group Six **6.30** Dad's Army **7.00** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner **7.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **7.45** Small Island **8.00** Wordaholics **8.30** A Whole 'Nother Story **9.00** Renaissance Man: The Last Judgment of Giorgio Vasari **10.00** Comedy Club: Just a Minute **10.30** Truly, Madly, Bletchley **10.45** Quando, Quando, Quando **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.00** Current-ish **11.30** The In Crowd

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Emma Vardy **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport: The Monday Night Club. debate the weekend's football **9.00** Athletics. Ed Harry presents coverage of the European Athletics Championships **10.00** Johnny I'Anson **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Jeff Stelling **10.00** Max Scott & Darragh McAnthony **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** Drive **7.00** TheTransfer Insiders **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Ian Collins **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** David Bull **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Steve Lamacq **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** Artist in Residence: Wolf Alice **12.00** The Smiths — Live **1.00am** The Smiths in Session **2.00** The Smiths at the BBC **4.00** The Smiths Playlist

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Steve Denyer

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Tim Lihoreau **9.00** Hall of Fame Hour **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings (r) **9.00** Composer Carousel with John Brunning **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

House of the Dragon
Sky Atlantic/Now, 9pm

The *Game of Thrones* prequel deferred a military confrontation in its second series finale, leaving everyone frustrated by the lack of dragon action. Series three is expected (the episode was not available to view) to climax with the Battle of Tumbleton. Tumbleton is the town taken over as a power base by the would-be kingmaker Ormund (James Norton), and where he proclaimed Daeron (Benjamin Evan Ainsworth) as Westeros's rightful ruler. Their rebel cause has been assisted by Rhaenyra's blunders and tyrannical ways as queen. But she and her uncle and, er, husband Daemon (Matt Smith) have started to move against Ormund, setting up a showdown between blacks and greens — or, as some may see it, thinly disguised versions of the Doctor and the villain in *Happy Valley*. **John Dugdale**

James Norton as Ormund

Martin and Roman's Irish Road Trip
Channel 4, 8pm

Martin and Roman Kemp have often teamed up on TV before, but not for a travel series. What makes that surprising is that their big rivals as a father-and-son double act, Bradley and Barney Walsh, have made seven series of their travelogue *Breaking Dad* since 2019. Maybe the Kemps saw Ireland as the ideal country to break their duck, as it's one of the few parts of the world unvisited by the Walshes. Their odyssey begins in Cork with tourist trail sites (a stone circle), a bit of myth (a banshee queen's local links) and some distinctive customs (storytelling, mourning). So it's all about old or timeless Ireland, with no interest shown — although Martin is an actor and singer, Roman is a presenter, and both are football fans — in current music, movies, TV or sport. Even though Roy Keane, Cillian Murphy and Graham Norton were raised in Co Cork. **JD**

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026. Jeanette Kwakye presents coverage of the opening session on day one from Alexander Stadium, including heats in the women's 100m and 400m hurdles and the men's 800m and 400m
1.15pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. A collection of plates at Witley recycling centre in Surrey
2.45 Escape to the Country. Jonnie Irwin helps a pair of early retirees find a new home in Wiltshire or Somerset (r) (AD)
3.30 The Repair Shop. A rocking horse, an ice cream trailer and a dictionary (r) (AD)
4.30 The Answer Run. Quiz show
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show Angellica Bell reports live from Birmingham with a look at the beginning of *The One Show*

7.30 EastEnders Max and Cindy set January 1st for their wedding. Later, he is surprised when Priya makes a performance at the car lot (AD)

8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day one from Alexander Stadium. The women's 100m final is the concluding event of the night. The men's 5,000m also takes place this evening. Medals are also awarded in the men's shot put and the mixed 4x400m relay. With analysis by Greg Rutherford, Jessica Ennis-Hill, and Jenny Meadows, and commentary from Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe. *See picks of the day*

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather
10.40 FILM: Bridget Jones's Baby (15, 2016) Bridget's focus on single life and her career is interrupted when she finds herself pregnant, but with one hitch — she can only be 50 per cent sure of the identity of her baby's father after a pair of one-night stands. Comedy sequel starring Renée Zellweger, Colin Firth and Patrick Dempsey (AD)

12.40am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2

6.30am Bargain Hunt: 20 Years of The One Show. With *One Show* presenters (r) (AD)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Repair Shop (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r) (AD)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz show (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown (r)
3.30 Spy in the Ocean (r) (AD)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow. From Winston Churchill's former home in Kent (r)
5.15 Flog It! Visits to the Ulster Transport Museum and Bletchley Park (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. With panellists Chris Bisson, Danielle Harold, Katharine Merry and Robert Webb (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning. The presenter helps former best friends work to repair their broken friendship (r) (AD)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents coverage of the evening session on day one, including the women's shot put final and the women's 100m hurdles heats. Coverage continues on BBC1. *See picks of the day*

8.00 Only Connect The Double Features take on the Colonial Geese

8.30 University Challenge Magdalen College, Oxford takes on Warwick

9.00 Evolution Chris Packham reveals why the horse became so fast as he sets out on a slithering, swimming, sprinting odyssey that explores the evolutionary beginnings of animal movement and how it reached its peak in one of the most elegant and athletic animals on Earth (5/5) (AD)

10.00 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing Paul and Bob fish for ferox trout in the Highlands (3/6) (r) (AD)

10.30 Newsnight Alex Forsyth presents

11.05 FILM: Shaft (15, 1971) A tough New York private eye is drawn into a gang war when he is hired to rescue a mobster's kidnapped daughter. Blaxploitation thriller starring Richard Roundtree, Moses Gunn and Charles Cioffi. *See film choice*

12.40am Sign Zone: Countryfile Adam Henson meets a new generation of farmers navigating the challenges and opportunities of producing our food. He starts in North Wales (r) (SL) **1.35-2.25** Bergerac. Chloe finds evidence proving there is some truth in John Blakely's accusations (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson is in Blackburn, where Matt Taylor happens upon an unlikely duet, Alys Dobbie sizes up a dress, and Tim Hogarth coins it in (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts the game show as a contestant tries to open the 22 boxes in the right order for the chance to win a cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as contestants pit their wits against one of the Chasers in the hope of winning a cash prize. They work as a team and play strategically to answer questions and race down the game board to the exit without being caught (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Fletchers' Family Farm The Fletchers focus on diversification, and Ruby the cow turns a corner (9/10) (r) (AD)

8.00 Emmerdale A villager's life is turned upside down. Meanwhile, Serena is left feeling conflicted (AD)

8.30 Coronation Street Tim urges Richie to make a go of his marriage, while Sarah finishes with Kit (AD)

9.00 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell help foundlings uncover why their mothers abandoned them. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 Cold Case Forensics: A Death on the Nile Forensic scientist Dr Angela Gallop and her team investigate the mysterious, sudden death of a British solicitor while on a romantic holiday in Egypt (2/3) (r) (AD)

11.45 Love & Death Candy retains Don Crowder as her attorney, while Allan admits his affair (5/7) (r) (AD)

12.35am Shop on TV 3.00 The Staircase. In 2003, tensions rise and old wounds reopen as the Petersons' eldest son Clayton returns home and unwittingly makes a critical discovery (r) (AD, SL) **4.10** Unwind with ITV **5.10-6.00** Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson is in Blackburn (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. A plan to turn some old tanks into a pizza oven (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. A couple team up with a stranger to buy a house in Porthmadog, north Wales (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Pauline McLynn
3.00 A Place in the Sun. A Leicester pair seek a holiday home in Mojácar, Spain (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. In Gloucestershire, an attic model railway is revealed at Chavenage (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. At the Château Lagorce, owners race to bring down an enormous fig tree before it can bring the wall of their wedding terrace crashing down (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. Mike and Frank encounter a coin-op empire ruled by sisters ready to rumble for every penny (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Martin and Roman's Irish Road Trip New series. Martin and Roman Kemp explore Ireland, beginning in County Cork, where they go kayaking, visit the former prison Spike Island and join a community storytelling group. *See picks of the day* (1/3) (AD)

9.00 Celebrity Hunted A daring escape plot is hatched in Brighton. Two of the celebs tap into a military network for intel and support. But the Hunters have picked up their signal and are closing in. A couple of content creators reckon they know how to outsmart their pursuers (AD)

10.00 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives Trewley clashes with her older sisters when they try to stop her going out to meet a friend, claiming she should still be subject to curfews and chaperones. Tina attends the launch party for Trewley's new make-up range (AD)

11.05 Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich A bride-to-be has a non-surgical liquid nose job, a mum-of-two tackles years of sun damage with laser technology, and a Cheshire-based property investor is investing over £1,000 a month in a programme of tweakments (4/6) (r) (AD)

12.05am Secrets of the Celebrity Sex Tapes (AD) **12.55** Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (AD, SL) **1.50** Murder Case: The Digital Detectives (r) (AD, SL) **2.40 FILM: Saba (15, 2024)** Drama starring Mehazabien Chowdhury. In Bengali **4.20** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r) **4.40** Hollyoaks (r) (AD, SL) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.20 FILM: My Fatal Memory (12, TVM, 2022) After a violent car accident robs Grace of her memory, a handsome stranger enters her life, insisting they are lovers. Thriller starring Kate Watson
4.00 Castle. Beckett and Castle investigate when an astronaut is murdered during a simulation for a mission to Mars, a private venture funded by an internet billionaire (r)
4.55 Love Nature. Cameras focus on the Cornish Seal Sanctuary (r)
5.00 5 News at 5
6.00 Sardinia: Jewel of the Med. Exploring the Italian island of Sardinia, its countless historic sites and their ambitious conservation project that aims to save the Sardinian Red Deer from extinction (r)
6.55 5 News with Dan Walker

7.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders Humberside Police gets multiple calls about a potential drink driver all over the road, so a PC races to try to catch up with him before he has a serious collision (5/10) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Street Cops: Catching the Yobs An officer hunts down an e-biker who appears to chuck something in the bushes while running from the law, while a driver pulled over by Weston Favell officers for speeding gets more than he bargained for

9.00 Fare Dodgers: At War with the Law Transport for London investigators are at Seven Kings Station in north-east London to hunt for a suspected fare evader owing the network almost £4,000 in unpaid fares

10.00 Police Interceptors: Taking Down the Shoplifting Gangs Detectives in Cheshire investigate an international criminal gang responsible for stealing £160,000 worth of premium goods from Asda over 81 raids (r)

11.05 Traffic Cops Near York, a young man who has stolen his grandfather's car leads the police on a bizarre and dangerous pursuit that ends in a trip to hospital for the driver. To the north of the county, two suspected fuel thieves are tracked by police cameras and arrested (r)

12.05am Car Pound Cops (r) **1.00** Cruise TV (r) **2.00** Entertainment News on 5 **2.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **3.00** Castle (r) **3.50** Friends (r) (AD) **4.35** Yorkshire with Jane McDonald (r) (SL) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Paw Patrol (r) (SL) **5.50-6.00** The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

television

European Athletics Championships
BBC1, 8pm/BBC2, 7pm

International competition returns to its rightful place on the BBC with Gabby Logan ably assisted by Jess Ennis-Hill, Greg Rutherford and Jenny Meadows, and with commentary from Steve Cram, Steve Backley, Andrew Cotter, Colin Jackson and Paula Radcliffe. Lots to watch out for at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham, including the 4x400m mixed relay final (9.40pm) and the 2025 world indoor 60m champion Jeremiah Azu taking on the 100m (9.50pm). **Helen Stewart**

Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace
ITV1, 9pm

"So this is the scarf I was wrapped in to make sure I wasn't cold, because it was a very cold time of year," says Michael, holding up a knitted piece of dark green fabric that he has folded and re-folded over the 30 years since 1996 when he was found as an infant by two revellers who thought his little hand was a Halloween prank. Davina McCall, as ever, treads with care and compassion as she and the team try to find his family. **HS**

STREAMING CHOICE

The Chosen In The Wild with Bear Grylls
Prime Video

In this documentary adventure series, Bear Grylls takes the stars of the Jesus drama *The Chosen*, including Elizabeth Tabish, who portrays Mary Magdalene in the series, and puts them through their survival paces in the US's most extreme landscapes. The stars are game, mostly, and Grylls is cock-a-hoop. "Sock-sucking with Judas Iscariot!" he blurts with glee as Luke Dimyan attempts to slurp brown run-off water through his hiking hosiery in Utah. "Wait, are we actually doing this?" Dimyan asks. Oh yes we are. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

Shaft (15, 1971)
BBC2, 11.05pm

This 1970s blaxploitation classic has a great performance from Richard Roundtree as a tough New York private eye hired by a gangster to find his missing teenage daughter. However, the girl has been kidnapped by the mafia, meaning he's soon in the middle of a turf war for control of Harlem. (100min) **James Jackson**

BBC4

7.00pm The Architecture the Railways Built (1/10) (AD)
7.40 The Flying Gardener
8.00 The Art of Spain. The golden age of Spanish painting (AD)
9.00 Mastermind. Quiz. From 1977
9.30 Call My Bluff. Game show
10.00 The Sky at Night. Professor Brian Cox joins the team to explore the mysteries of black holes
10.30 The Golden Age of Spanish Painting: Omnibus. The artwork of the period between 1550 and 1700
11.20 One Hundred Great Paintings
11.35 Britain's Lost Waterlands: Escape to Swallows and Amazons Country. Landscapes (AD)
12.35am The Flying Gardener **12.50** The Art of Spain (AD) **1.50** The Golden Age of Spanish Painting: Omnibus **2.40am-3.40** Britain's Lost Waterlands: Escape to Swallows and Amazons Country (AD)

Sky Arts

6.00am Cirque du Soleil: Corteo
8.00 Artist of the Year: Masterclass (AD) **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Peter Sellers (AD) **12.00** The Art of Film with Ian Nathan (AD) **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.00** The Eighties (AD) **4.00** Discovering: Robert Shaw (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 (AD)
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected (AD)
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
8.00 André Rieu: La Vie Est Belle
9.45 FILM: Billy Elliot — The Musical (12, 2014) Musical
12.35am Up Late with Nicola Benedetti **2.10** LSO: Pappano Conducts Ravel, Say & Rachmaninoff **3.50** Sky Arts Ambassador Bursary Shorts **4.00** Sky Arts Book Club **5.00am-6.00** The Art of Film (AD)

More4

8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS. Restoring a Porsche in terrible condition (AD)
6.50 Car SOS. An Austin Healey is secretly fixed up in Co Durham (AD)
7.55 Grand Designs. A couple build a contemporary farmhouse in Herefordshire (4/7) (AD)
9.00 24 Hours in A&E. An 85-year-old man is brought to St George's with a swollen hand (AD)
10.00 24 Hours in A&E. Patients include a 27-year-old tree surgeon who fell 40ft to the ground (AD)
11.05 999: On the Front Line. The service gets exceedingly busy in the early hours of Saturday morning
12.05am Emergency Helicopter Medics. A nasty head injury (AD)
1.10 24 Hours in A&E (AD)
3.20am-3.50 A Place in the Sun

Live sport today

Plymouth Argyle take on Exeter City at Home Park

Live European Athletics Championships
TNT Sports 3, 10.30am-1pm
The first day of the event

Live The Hundred: Trent Rockets Women v Southern Brave
Sky Sports Cricket, 2.45pm-6.00, Sky Sports Main Event, 3pm-6.00
(Start-time **3.00**). Coverage of the match at Trent Bridge

Live The Hundred: Trent Rockets Men v Southern Brave Men
Sky Sports Main Event, 6pm-7.45, Sky Sports Cricket, 6pm-9.30
(Start-time **6.30**). Coverage of the match at Trent Bridge

Live EFL Cup: Plymouth Argyle v Exeter City
Sky Sports Football, 7pm-10.30, Sky Sports Main Event, 7.45pm-10.30
(Kick-off **8.00**). At Home Park

Live Tennis
Sky Sports +, Sky Sports Tennis, 9pm-11.00
The Canadian Open. Day nine

Talking Pictures

6.00am The Vise (b/w) **6.30 FILM: Devil's Bait (U, 1959)** (b/w) **7.40 FILM: The Dark Road (PG, 1948)** (b/w) **9.10 FILM: River Beat (U, 1954)** (b/w) **10.30** Z Cars **11.30 FILM: Inspector Hornleigh (U, 1939)** (b/w) **1.00pm** Richard the Lionheart (b/w) **1.30 FILM: Night Train to Paris (U, 1964)** (b/w) **2.45 FILM: The Men of Sherwood Forest (U, 1954) 4.20 FILM: I'm All Right Jack (U, 1959)** (b/w)
6.25 Scotland Yard
7.00 The Footage Detectives
8.00 Maigret
9.50 FILM: The Weak and the Wicked (PG, 1954) Drama (b/w)
11.35 FILM: Murders in Cornouaille (15, TVM, 2018) 1.40am FILM: California Suite (12, 1978) 3.45 FILM: A Hole Lot of Trouble (PG, 1971) 4.20 Cinebox Memories **4.25am-5.00** The Veil (b/w)

Film4

11.00am Playing with Fire (PG, 2019) Comedy (AD) **12.55pm Steel Magnolias (PG, 1989)** Drama (AD) **3.15 All That Heaven Allows (U, 1955)** Romantic drama starring Jane Wyman **5.00 The Enemy Below (PG, 1957)** Second World War thriller starring Robert Mitchum
7.00 Film4 Interview Programmes: Talking Film. Movie making
7.05 Dog (12, 2022) Comedy starring Channing Tatum (AD)
9.00 Angel Has Fallen (15, 2019) A Secret Service agent is framed for an assassination attempt on the President. Action thriller sequel starring Gerard Butler (AD)
11.20 Peppermint (15, 2018) Revenge thriller starring Jennifer Garner and Jeff Hephner (AD)
1.20am-3.50 Lucy in the Sky (15, 2019) Drama starring Natalie Portman and Jon Hamm

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60. Steve Backshall explores the island of Madagascar
7.30 Deadly 60. Steve Backshall learns about primates in Uganda
8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee. The sewers celebrate Mexican fashions and textiles (AD)
9.00 Top Gear: Burma Special. The presenters drive lorries through the South East Asian country
11.05 Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury. Tommy faces his comeback fight in Budapest, and the pressure is on (6/10) (AD)
11.35 Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury. Tommy hits a major setback (7/10) (AD)
12.05am Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury. Triple bill (AD)
1.35 Drugs Map of Britain (AD)
3.35am-3.55 Disclosure

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City **8.20** The Real Housewives of Orange County **9.15** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor USA (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City. Last in the series **5.00** The Real Housewives of Orange County
5.55 Celebrity Catchphrase (AD)
7.00 The Floor USA (AD)
8.00 The 1% Club (AD)
9.00 The Only Way Is Essex
10.00 Family Guy (AD)
11.35 American Dad! (AD)
12.35am Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30** Plebs (AD, SL) **1.55am-2.20** Deep Fake Neighbour Wars (SL)

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.10** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.35** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat. Rural drama (AD)
8.00 Midsomer Murders. Jones infiltrates a cult to investigate a woman's disappearance (AD)
10.00 Grantchester. Geordie and Will investigate the suspicious death of a circus performer (1/8) (AD)
11.00 Grantchester. Geordie hears Will is thinking of leaving (2/8) (AD)
11.50 Trial & Retribution. Part one of two. A mother arrives home to find her baby daughter dead (7/10)
1.25am-2.20 Agatha Christie's Poirot. David Suchet stars (AD)

ITV4

6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.05** Robin of Sherwood **9.10** Boon **10.20** The Professionals (AD) **11.25** Robin of Sherwood **12.35pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.40** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **3.45** Boon **4.50** The Professionals (AD) **5.55** Minder (AD)
7.00 River Monsters. A violent attack in a remote Mongolian river
7.30 River Monsters. Deaths in the waters of America's tourist hotspots
8.00 The Motorbike Show. A road trip to Exmouth in East Devon
9.00 FILM: Under Siege 2 — Dark Territory (18, 1995) Action adventure sequel starring Steven Seagal and Eric Bogosian
11.10 Star Trek: Strange New Worlds. A landing party is stranded with a ravenous enemy (AD)
12.10am Lost **1.05** Motorsport UK **2.00am-2.50** BattleBots

U&Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.15** The Bill **8.05** Doctors **9.20** Classic Holby City **10.40** Casualty (AD) **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Classic Neighbours **3.00** Whitstable Pearl (AD) **4.05** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By
6.00 Last of the Summer Wine
8.00 The Brokenwood Mysteries. Investigating the death of a woman struck by an arrow (2/4) (AD)
10.00 New Tricks. The team reinvestigates the death of a wealthy financier (1/10) (AD)
11.20 Luther. The detective is framed for murder, and teams up with unlikely allies when DSU Teller takes ruthless action (6/6) (AD)
12.40am Lovejoy. A forged snuff box **1.50** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **2.50** Hotel Portofino (SL) **4.00am-6.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm Girl Fight. Last in the series (r) 11.10 FILM: Bridget Jones's Baby (2016) Comedy sequel 1.05am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
12.35am Scotcast. Discussion (r) 1.05 Weather for the Week Ahead 1.10am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2 N Ireland
10.00pm-10.30 Kayak ó Thuaidh. Last in the series (r)

ITV1 Wales
10.45pm-11.45 Deal or No Deal: Celebrity Special. Adam and Ryan Thomas go up against the Banker

STV
12.35am-3.00 Shop on TV 4.10am-6.00 Night Vision

BBC Scotland
2.00pm-4.30 Sign Zone (r) 7.00 Reporting Scotland: News at Seven 7.30 The Great Food Guys (r) 8.00 The Mountain (r) 9.00 Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr (r) 10.00 River City 10.30 Two Doors Down (r) 11.00 Scotcast 11.30pm-12.00 Gary: Tank Commander (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 12.00 News; Weather 12.05pm Ffasiwn Drefn (r) 12.30 Heno (r) 1.00 Straeon Harri Parri (r) 2.00 News; Weather 2.05 Prynhawn Da 3.00 News; Weather 3.05 Y Sioe 2026 (r) 4.00 Awr Fawr 5.00 Stwnsh 6.00 Arfordir Cymru: Sir Benfro (r) 6.30 Ralïo+ (r) 6.59 News 7.00 Heno 7.30 News; Weather 8.00 Sgwrs Dan y Lloer (r) 8.25 Garddio a Mwy 8.55 News; Weather 9.00 Cefn Gwlad 9.58 Y Tywydd 10.00 Y Deis (r) 10.30-11.35pm Y Fets (r)

PBS America

8.00am Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **9.30** Planet of the Plates **10.45** 1066: A Year to Conquer England **11.55** Inside Japan's War **1.00pm** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **1.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **2.35** Planet of the Plates **3.50** 1066: A Year to Conquer England
5.05 Inside Japan's War
6.10 Digging Up Britain's Past
7.10 Planet of the Plates. Scientists unpack the geologic process of plate tectonics
8.25 1066: A Year to Conquer England. Dan Snow explores events leading up to the Battle of Hastings
9.40 Inside Japan's War. Imperial Japan's military motives and culture
10.50 Planet of the Plates
12.00 1066: A Year to Conquer England. With Dan Snow **1.15am-2.00** Weathered: Earth's Extremes

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.15** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **12.30pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.15** Billions (r) (AD)
4.30 The Last of Us (r) (AD)
6.45 The Penguin. Sofia makes a shocking discovery (7/8) (r) (AD)
7.45 The Penguin. Oz's power struggle with Sofia comes to a head. Last in the series (r) (AD)
9.00 House of the Dragon. *Game of Thrones* prequel. Last in the series. *See picks of the day* (r)
10.25 Possession. Supernatural thriller starring Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Johnny Lee Miller (r) (AD)
11.25 Possession. A lawyer travels to Jamaica to challenge an inheritance claim (r) (AD)
12.30am Dune: Prophecy. Valya struggles (r) (AD) **1.45** Billions (r) (AD) **4.05** Urban Secrets (r) **5.05am-6.00** The Guest Wing (r) (AD)

Sky Docs

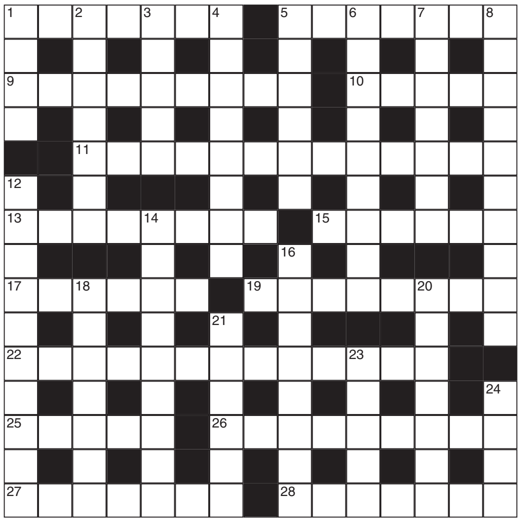
6.00am The 2000s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Richard Attenborough (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.00** Juan Carlos: Downfall of the King (r) **10.55** Celtics City (r) (AD) **12.00** Faye (r) **1.45pm** Schmeichel (r) (AD) **3.45** My Icon: Thierry Henry (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Richard Attenborough (r) (AD) **6.00** An American Bombing: The Road to April 19th (r) (AD)
8.00 Libby, Are You Home Yet? The 2019 murder of Libby Squire (r) (AD)
11.00 FILM: Bowling for Columbine (15, 2002) Documentary exploring America's love affair with firearms
1.20am The Great Horsemeat Scandal (r) (AD) **2.00** Savage Mountain. Following Kristin Harila (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00am-6.00** Discovering: Richard Attenborough (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** Hitler's Countdown to War **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** Hitler's Countdown to War
6.00 Antiques Roadshow
7.00 A Perfect Planet (AD)
8.00 Canal Boat Diaries (3/5)
8.30 Canal Boat Diaries. Travelling along the Rochdale Canal (4/5)
9.00 Portillo's Empire Journey. Exploring how British rule led to armed rebellion in America (4/4)
10.00 Bangers & Cash. A Saab 96L and a Volvo P1800ES (AD)
11.00 Bangers & Cash (AD)
12.00 Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

General Knowledge Crossword No 350



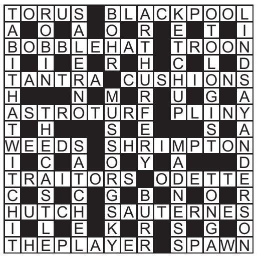
Across

1 Island nation located between Mozambique and Madagascar (7)
5 Technical name for the back of the head or skull (7)
9 Deadpan singer who fronted the Specials (5,4)
10 Eva ---, first lady of Argentina from 1946 to 1952 (5)
11 Taxation body that merged with HM Customs and Excise in 2005 (6,7)
13 Series of three dots indicating a textual omission (8)
15 Bodily hollow also known as an oxter (6)
17 Citizens of the largest island in the Caribbean (6)
19 TV programme such as *Family Fortunes* or *Catchphrase* (4,4)
22 *BBC Breakfast* co-host moving to Radio 5 Live in January (4,9)
25 The Addams family's butler (5)
26 Cambridge college named after a biblical woman (9)
27 --- mint, traditional sweet that originated in Liverpool (7)
28 Leslie ---, star of the films *The Naked Gun* and *Airplane!* (7)

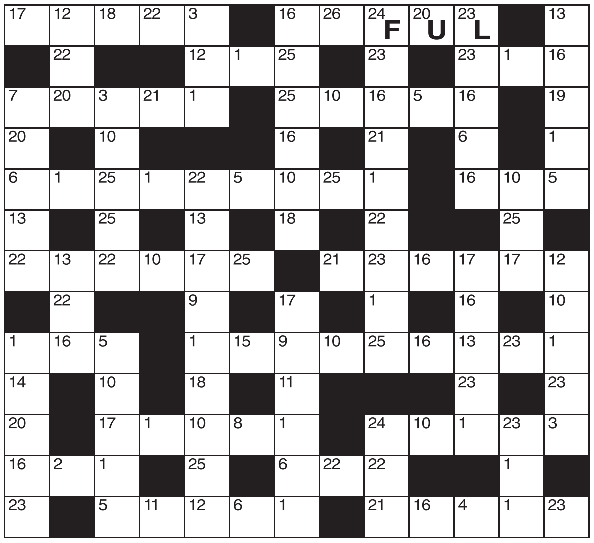
Down

1 Animals with Turkish Van and Cornish Rex breeds (4)
2 Roman author of the *Epigrams* born in modern-day Spain (7)
3 Currency of Saudi Arabia and Qatar (5)
4 Whelk or conch, eg (3,5)
5 Edmonton's ice hockey team or, formerly, Houston's American football team (6)
6 Smallest African qualifier at the 2026 Fifa World Cup (4,5)
7 Relative of the carrot with a pale-coloured edible root (7)
8 Nickname for Hollywood (10)
12 Scottish band whose singles include *Dignity* and *Real Gone Kid* (6,4)
14 Headwear item of Ecuadorian origin despite its name (6,3)
16 Any disease-causing agent (8)
18 Dirk ---, *A Bridge Too Far* and *Death in Venice* actor (7)
20 17th-century Dutch inventor of the pendulum clock who also discovered the moon Titan (7)
21 Pointer on a sundial (6)
23 Rank shared by Macbeth and Macduff in the tragic play (5)
24 Frond-bearing plant (4)

Last week's solution



Codeword No 5915



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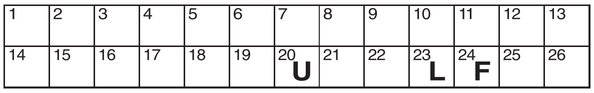
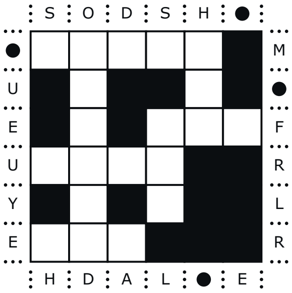
A B C D E ~~F~~ G H I J K ~~L~~ M N O P Q R S T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z

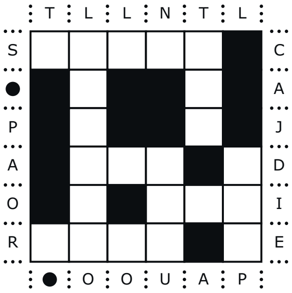


Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Saturday's solution, right*

Cluelines Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

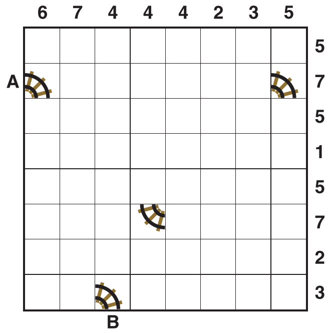
Lexica Easy No 9045 Hard No 9046





Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2940



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2642

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Vulgarian is large and unfashionable (4)

_ _ _ _

2 Island society with very little warmth (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 Comedian and gambler holding spades (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Internet phenomenon not bad souvenir (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Meeting ruined by measles, losing energy (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	B	C	E	E	E	E	I
I	L	L	L	M	M	M	N
N	O	O	P	R	S	S	S
S	T	T	T	U	U	Y	Y

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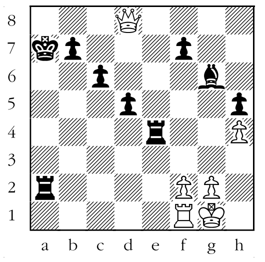
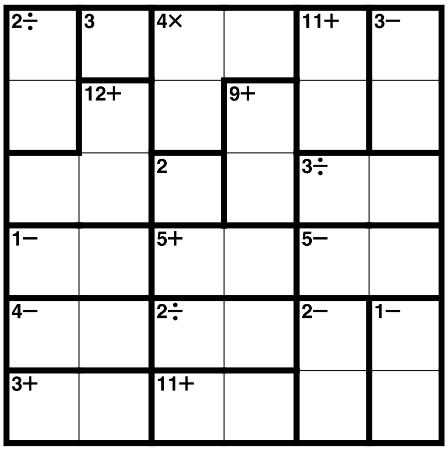
Winning Move



White to play.
This position is from Gao-Garcia Ramos, Hong Kong 2026.

Although White has a material advantage here, Black's three connected pawns are a potential problem. However, the black king is somewhat insecure as White quickly demonstrated. Can you see how?

KenKen Easy No 6907



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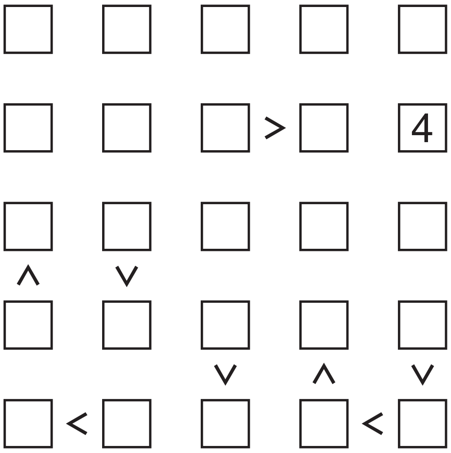
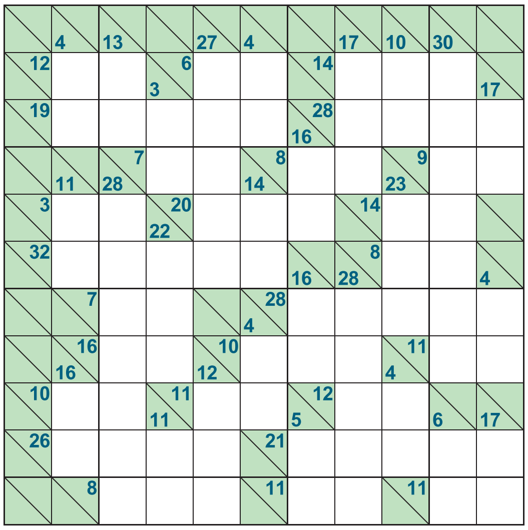
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5455



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4414



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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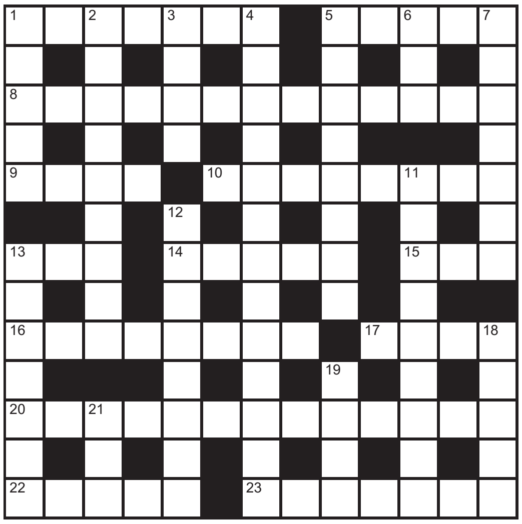
MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,231



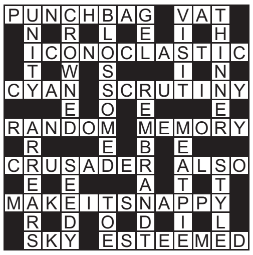
Across

1 Taciturn, terse (7)
5 Powdered tobacco (5)
8 Astronomical start of spring (6,7)
9 Delicately skilful (4)
10 Evangelical minister (8)
13 The whole (of) (3)
14 First Greek letter (5)
15 Place money (on) (3)
16 Quadrennial sports event (8)
17 Owl's cry (4)
20 Repugnant, distasteful (13)
22 Hooligan (5)
23 Heavy cooking plate (7)

Down

1 Enraged (5)
2 In a cautious manner (9)
3 Genesis boat-builder (4)
4 Selecting the best items only (6-7)
5 Confine out of sight (4,4)
6 Vase-like receptacle (3)
7 Phonetic codeword for "F" (7)
11 Chatted socially (9)
12 Spanish soup served cold (8)
13 Expression of remorse (7)
18 The ones here (5)
19 Against (4)
21 Short straight punch (3)

Solution to Crossword 10,230



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

You seldom see a swing of 15 imps or more in a team match, equating to a score difference of 1,100 points or more. On this board from the Open series of the 57th European Bridge National Team Championships in Riga, there was (at least) a 15-imp swing in nine of the 15 matches. The England v Croatia match was one of those nine.

At Table One, England bought it in 5♣, South leading a top spade. To defeat 5♣, South has to switch to a heart (either of them) at trick two. When he continued with a second top spade, declarer could ruff, draw trumps and run the queen of diamonds. North won the king and switched to a heart. However, declarer could win the ace and (after playing out all his trumps) score the ♦AJ (dropping ♦10) and ♦9. Away went his two low hearts and that was game made. At the 13 tables in which the contract was 5♣ (once doubled), it was defeated only three times.

At Table Two, England declared 5♠, North making that key decision to bid a fifth spade. Only a low diamond lead defeats 5♠ (dream on) and all 13 declarers made it. Interestingly, 12 were doubled — only in England-Croatia was 5♠ undoubled.

Declarer, Tom Paske of Vienna, ruffed the club lead, drew trumps and forced out the ace of hearts. He was soon shedding a diamond on dummy's third heart and leading towards the king of diamonds.

England going +600 at Table One and +650 at Table Two meant 15 Imps, more than England's final margin of victory in the match.

Dealer: East, Vulnerability: Both

Teams

North:
♠ 108732
♥ KJ65
♦ K843
♣ -

West:
♠ Q5
♥ 10874
♦ AJ97
♣ J76

East:
♠ 4
♥ A93
♦ Q2
♣ AKQ10942

South:
♠ AKJ96
♥ Q2
♦ 1065
♣ 853

Table One (England E-W)

S	W(Dyke)	N	E(Byrne)
			1♣
1♠	Dbl(1)	4♠	5♣(2)
end			

(1) Negative double from Kieran Dyke of London, showing hearts.
(2) Michael Byrne of Manchester is seldom backward in coming forward — although this 5♣ bid was pretty clear.

One Byrne bid I loved from another match was overcalling 4♥ over a 3♠ opener holding ♠AJxx, ♥AKQx, ♦- ♣A10xxx. Few others found the (making) 4♥ game — facing partner's near-Yarborough with five hearts.

Contract: 5♣ (by E), Opening Lead: ♠K

Table Two (England N-S)

S(Paske)	W	N(Gold)	E
			1♣
1♠	Dbl	4♠	5♣
Pass	Pass	5♠ (1)	end

(1) Key decision to bid Five over Five by David Gold of Watford, buoyed by the void. If either 5♣ or 5♠ is making, it's a big winner to bid on. And if both are making, it's massive.

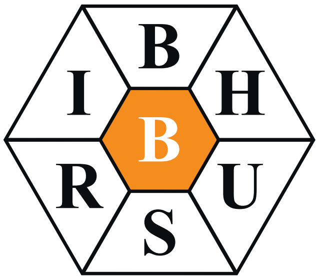
Contract: 5♠ (by S), Opening Lead: ♣7

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY 54	÷ 9	x 5	+ 15	DOUBLE IT	– 10	÷ 4	+ 5	x 2	DOUBLE IT	ANSWER
MEDIUM 10	x 5	+ 15	+ 1	TREBLE IT	x 2	-⅓ OF IT	+ 6	-20% OF IT	÷ 8	ANSWER
HARDER 32	x 6	TREBLE IT	+ 6	TREBLE IT	50% OF IT	+ 7	35% OF IT	DOUBLE IT	÷ 8	ANSWER

Polygon

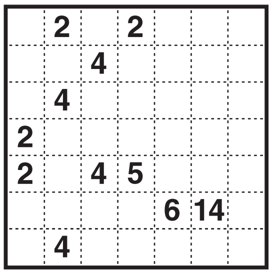


From these letters, make words of **three** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 8 words, average; 11, good; 15, very good; 19, excellent

Saturday's answers

amount, atom, auto, **autonomous**, mason, moan, moat, mono, moon, moot, most, mount, muon, muso, naos, notam, nous, nutso, oast, onomast, onto, onus, oust, santo, snoot, snot, snout, soma, soon, soot, stoa, stoma, sumo, tons, toon, tosa, unto

Cell Blocks No 5798



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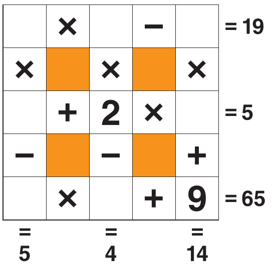
Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

Set Square No 4417



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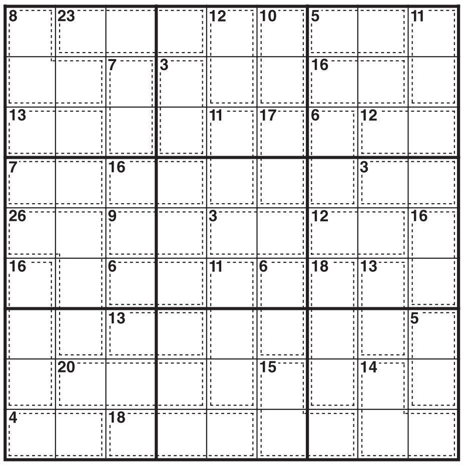
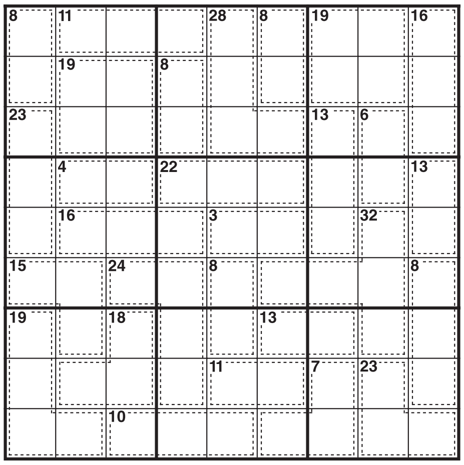
Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Gentle No 10,868



Killer Tricky No 10,869

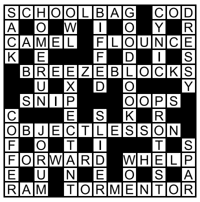


As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

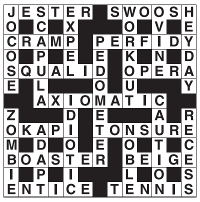
Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Solutions

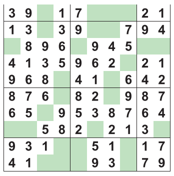
Quick Cryptic 3374



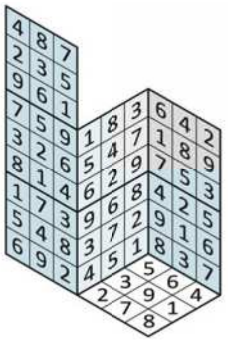
Codeword 5914



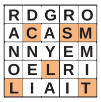
Kakuro 4412



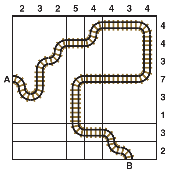
Tredoku 1954



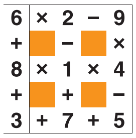
Square Routes 388



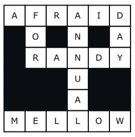
Train Tracks 2939



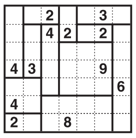
Set Square 4415



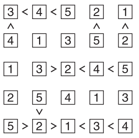
Lexica 9039



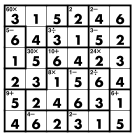
Cell Blocks 5797



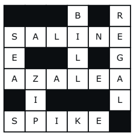
Futoshiki 5453



KenKen 6906



Lexica 9040



Sudoku 17,012

7	3	9	1	2	4	6	8	5
5	4	2	8	7	6	1	3	9
1	6	8	3	9	5	4	2	7
2	5	6	7	3	8	9	4	1
9	7	4	5	1	2	3	6	8
8	1	3	6	4	9	5	7	2
4	9	1	2	8	3	7	5	6
3	2	5	9	6	7	8	1	4
6	8	7	4	5	1	2	9	3

Killer 10,867

1	7	6	4	5	3	8	2	9
4	2	5	9	8	6	3	7	1
3	8	9	7	1	2	6	5	4
7	4	3	8	9	1	2	6	5
2	5	8	3	6	4	1	9	7
9	6	1	2	7	5	4	3	8
8	3	2	5	4	7	9	1	6
5	1	4	6	3	9	7	8	2
6	9	7	1	2	8	5	4	3

Today's solutions

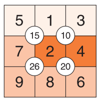
Concise Quintagram

1 Four
2 Times
3 Beacon
4 Station
5 Controlled

Cryptic Quintagram

1 Lout
2 Sicily
3 Punster
4 Memento
5 Assembly

Sakuro 4816



Brain Trainer

Easy 100
Medium 27
Harder 77

Word watch

Scolion (a) A song performed by banquet guests (*Collins*)
Altitudinarian (b) A person with grand ideals (*Chambers*)
Ross (a) The scaly outer part of tree bark (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move

1 Rb1! is quiet but deadly. The threat to check on b6 can be met only by 1 ... Ra6 but then the further regrouping 2 Qc7! creates a decisive threat against b7

Quiz

1 Big Ben or Elizabeth Tower **2** A gun **3** Declaration of Independence **4** Percy Bysshe Shelley **5** Earth **6** The Birds **7** Sainsbury's **8** Robert F Kennedy **9** Tomato **10** Science Museum **11** Robert Boyle **12** Virginia Evans **13** Maarten Tromp **14** Poland **15** HG Wells

THE TIMES

MindGames

10.08.26

For extra puzzles
See page 10

Word watch

David Parfitt

Scolion
a A song performed by banquet guests
b A spring onion or shallot
c A contemptible person

Altitudinarian
a An obsessive mountaineer
b A person with grand ideals
c Continually changing one's mind

Ross
a The scaly outer part of tree bark
b A man's ponytail
c A red mark or patch on the skin

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Easy No 17,013

				9	6			
		7	5			1		
	3		1			4	2	
	7	8		2	5			
3			7			2	5	
1			3				4	6
	9	1		6		5	8	
		5		3	2	6		
					1			

Difficult No 17,014

							7	
	4	2			9	3		
	3		1			4	5	
		4		1	8			
			7	3		2	9	
	5		9				8	
	2	1		8		9		
6		7		5	1			

Fiendish No 17,015

	2			3				
1						8		7
			5	1			4	
	7	9			6	2		
								9
	5	4			8	7		
			2	5			7	
9						3		2
	1			8				

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz

Olav Bjortomt

1 The Little Ben miniature clock tower in Victoria was inspired by which more famous London landmark?

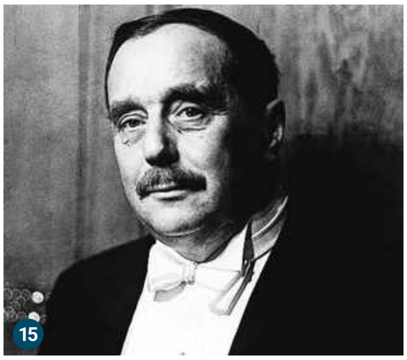
2 Mao Zedong said: "Political power grows out of the barrel of ..." which weapon?

3 "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" are "unalienable Rights" mentioned in which 1776 US document?

4 Which Romantic poet was played by Douglas Booth in the 2017 film *Mary Shelley*?

5 What is the densest planet in the solar system?

6 Which 1995 collection by Alexander McQueen was inspired by ornithology and a 1963 Hitchcock film?



7 Which supermarket has agreed a £120m deal to sell Argos to Swift Partners?

8 On June 5, 1968, which New York senator was shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles?

9 Bombón Colorao is a prized Spanish variety of which fruit?

10 Imax: the Ronson Theatre is part of which London museum?

11 Which 17th-century chemist discovered that the volume of a gas decreases with increasing pressure and vice versa?

12 *The Correspondent* is a 2025 epistolary novel by which American author?

13 Who commanded the victorious Dutch Republic fleet at the 1652 Battle of Dungeness?

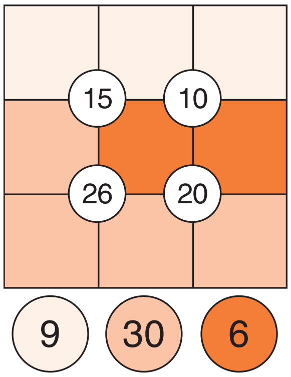
14 The Tour de Pologne is which country's biggest cycling event?

15 Which English writer (1866-1946) is pictured?

Answers on page 15

Sakuro

No 4816



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

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9:41
Puzzles
Sudoku
Today
9:41
Puzzles
This week's puzzles
Crosswords
Sudokus

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

The Times Quick Cryptic

No 3376 by Teazel

■	1	■	2	■	3	■	4		5		6	
7								■		■		■
■		■		■		■	8					
9								■		■		■
■	■	■		■		■		■	■	■		■
10	11			■	12	13			14			
■		■		■	■		■	■		■		■
15					16		17	■	18			
■		■	■	■		■		■		■	■	■
■		■	19	■	20						21	
22						■		■		■		■
■		■		■	23							
24						■		■		■		■

Across
4 Manage to hear end of story, easy to remember (6)
7 Horror regularly in recess for library user (8)
8 A right grim passion (6)
9 That sly European suspect is trying to escape notice (8)
10 One marsh turns into desert (4)
12 Pushes away — don't touch! (5,3)
15 Secure small whisky, for example, in provincial capital (8)
18 People naming hospital? (4)
20 Plan gets a try, disastrously (8)
22 Mean to be camping? (6)
23 No teaser managed to receive sympathetic response (8)
24 Left inside like a cat in light snowfall (6)

Down
1 Fit for boxing match (4)
2 Reaction when Charlie comes right up in striking garment (8)
3 False hair singular on hag (6)
4 Minimum of check fabric in drawer (6)
5 Orderly is fairly big (4)
6 From shelf you moved domestic pest (8)
11 Unexpurgated novel (8)
13 Expert participant in tea ceremony (3)
14 Expressing disappointment about time for rare viewing (8)
16 Eclair for one finished extremely readily (6)
17 Gaudy decoration, not new (6)
19 Clothes that may be changed in car (4)
21 Barrier that often puts end to scandal (4)

Friday's solution on page 15